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ANNEX





and the Copied.

Christianity as old as the Creation :

O R, T H E

G O S P E L,

A REPUBLICATION of the

Religion of N A T U R E.

by Matthew Tindal

V O L U M E I.

Est autem jus naturale adeo immutabile, ut ne quidem a Deo mutari possit.

Grot. de Jure Belli & Pacis, l. 1. c. 1. §. 10. E. 5.

The Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by Nature the Things contained in the Law.

Rom. ii. 14.

God is no Respecter of Persons: but in every Nation, he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him.

Acts x. 34, 35.

Proinde perfectam illam Religionem quæ Christi prædicatione nobis tradita est, non Novam aut Peregrinam, sed si verum dicere oportet, primam, solam, veramque esse liquido apparet.

Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 1. c. 4. Valesius's Transl.

Res ipsa quæ nunc Christiana Religio nuncupatur, erat & apud Antiquos, nec defuit ab Initio generis humani, quousq; ipse Christus veniret in carne; unde vera Religio quæ jam erat, cœpit appellari Christiana.

Aug. Oper. To. 1. p. 17. c. Retraſ. l. 1. c. 13.

The Religion of the Gospel, is the true original Religion of Reason and Nature. — And its Precepts declarative of that original Religion, which was as old as the Creation,

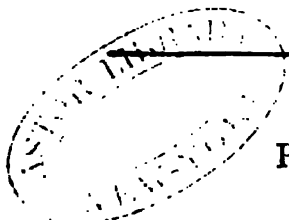
Serm. for prop. the Gosp. in for. Parts, by Dr. Sherlock, now Bp. of Bangor, p. 10, & 13.

God does nothing in the Government of the World by mere Will and Arbitrariness. — The Will of God always determines itself to act according to the eternal Reason of Things. All rational Creatures are oblig'd to govern themselves in ALL their Actions by the same eternal Rule of Reason.

Dr. S. Clark's Unchang. Oblig. of Nat. Relig. Edit. 4. p. 47, 48, 49.

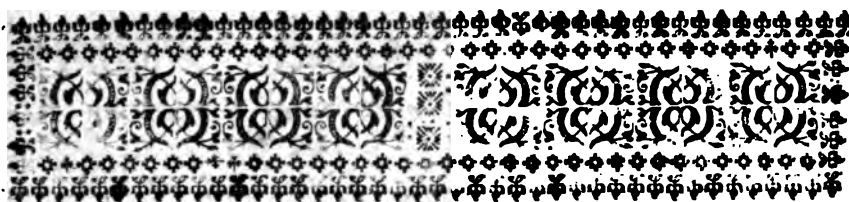
L O N D O N,

Printed in the YEAR, M D C C X X X.



ERRATA.

PAge 10. Line 9. *for* absurd, *read* a great Mistake; and Line *ib.* *after* Obligation, *add* of moral Duties. p. 16. l. 3. in the Margin, *read* 1 John 4. 19. p. 68. l. 6. *for* Agreemens, *read* Agreement. p. *ib.* l. 7. *add* which, *at the Beginning of the Line.* p. 156. l. 14. *for* Legislator, *read* Legislature. p. 227. l. 29. in the Margin, *for* Serm. 77. *read* Serm. 74. p. 254. l. 3. at the Beginning of the Paragraph, *for* ONE, *read* SOME. p. 270. l. 21. the *Parenthesis* stands the wrong Way. p. 287. l. 20. *for* *Papist* and *Mabometan*, *read* *Papist*, or *Mabometan*. p. 299. l. 17. at the Beginning of the Paragraph, *for* *If* the Religion of Peasants, *read* *If*, *say they*, the Religion of Peasants, &c. p. *ib.* l. 31. *for* *If* in the earliest Times, *read* *If*, *add they*, in the earliest Times, &c. p. 347. l. 4. *for* *Must* Men, *read* *Must not* Men, &c. p. 355. l. 4. *unde* the *Comma's* thus " at the Beginning of the Line. p. 414. l. 23. *dele* *And before the Words* much less.



T H E

P R E F A C E.



THE Author of the following Sheets, makes no Apology for writing on a Subject of the last Importance ; and which, as far as I can find, has no where been so fully treated : He builds nothing on a Thing so uncertain as *Tradition*, which differs in most Countries ; and of which, in all Countries, the Bulk of Mankind are incapable of judging ; but thinks he has laid down such plain and evident Rules, as may enable Men of the meanest Capacity, to distinguish between *Religion*, and *Superstition* ; and has represented the Former in every Part so beautiful, so amiable, and so strongly affecting ; that they, who in the least reflect, must be highly in Love with it ; and easily perceive, that their

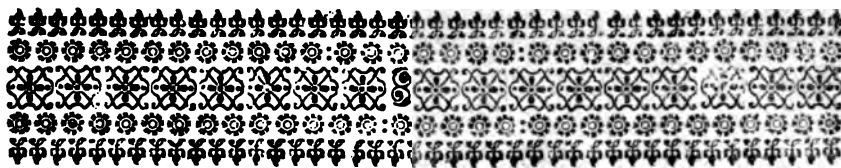
A 2

Duty

Duty and Happiness are inseparable. Whether he has succeeded in this Noble, and Generous Attempt, the Reader will be better able to judge, if he reads with the same Freedom, and Impartiality, as the Author wrote.

THE Manner of debating a Subject Dialogue-wise, (as This between *A.* and *B.*) was esteem'd by the Ancients the most proper, as well as most prudent, Way of exposing prevailing Absurdities; and *Tully's* two Discourses, *de Natura Deorum*, and *de Divinatione*, both levell'd against the Superstition of his Country-men; are living Monuments of the Expediency, and Usefulness of this Way of Writing: And certainly, the Reader may be better entertain'd thus, than by that dry Way of Objection and Answer, with which Controversies are usually manag'd.





T H E
C O N T E N T S
O F T H E
First V O L U M E.



C H A P. I.



HAT God, at all Times, has given Mankind sufficient Means, of knowing whatever he requires of them ; and what those Means are.

Page 1.

C H A P. II.

That the Religion of Nature consists in observing those Things, which our Reason, by considering the Nature of God and Man, and the Relation we stand in to him, and one another, demonstrates to be our Duty ; and that those Things are plain ; and likewise what they are.

p. 13.

C H A P.

The CONTENTS.

C H A P. III.

That the Perfection, and Happiness of all rational Beings, supreme, as well as subordinate, consists in living up to the Dictates of their Nature. p. 22.

C H A P. IV.

That not only the Matter of all God's Laws, but the Penalties annex'd to them, are for the Good of Mankind; even those who suffer for the Breach of them. p. 36.

C H A P. V.

That God requires nothing for his own sake; no, not the Worship we are to render him, nor the Faith we are to have in him. p. 44.

C H A P. VI.

That the Religion of Nature is an absolutely perfect Religion; and that external Revelation can neither add to, nor take from its Perfection; and that True Religion, whether internally, or externally reveal'd, must be the same. p. 58.

C H A P. VII.

That Natural and Reveal'd Religion having the same End, their Precepts must be the same. p. 69.

C H A P. VIII.

That the not adhering to those Notions Reason dictates, concerning the Nature of God, has been the Occasion of all Superstition, and those innumerable Mischiefs, that Mankind

The CONTENTS.

vii

kind, on the Account of Religion, have done either to themselves, or one another. p. 85.

CHAP. IX.

Human Happiness being the ultimate Design, and End of all Traditional, as well as Original Revelation, they must both prescribe the same Means; since those Means, which, at one Time, promote human Happiness, equally promote it at all Times. p. 104.

CHAP. X.

God does not act arbitrarily, or interpose unnecessarily; but leaves those Things, that can only be consider'd as Means (and as such, are in their own Nature mutable;) to human Discretion; to determine as it thinks most conducing to those Things, which are in their own Nature obligatory. p. 115.

CHAP. XI.

The supposing Things merely positive, to be made the Ingredients of Religion, is inconsistent with the Good of Mankind, as well as the Honour of God. p. 141.

CHAP. XII.

That They, who, to magnify Revelation, weaken the Force of the Religion of Reason and Nature, strike at all Religion; and that there can't be Two Independent Rules for the Government of human Actions. p. 178.

CHAP.

The CONTENTS.

C H A P. XIII.

The Bulk of Mankind, by their Reason, must be able to distinguish between Religion and Superstition; otherwise they can never extricate themselves from that Superstition they chance to be educated in. p. 232.

C H A P. XIV.

Dr. Clark's Discourse of The Unchangeable Obligation of Natural Religion, and the Truth, and Certainty of the Christian Revelation; consider'd: And from thence is shewn, how inconsistent soever with the Design of that that Discourse, that Nothing can be a Part of Religion, but what is founded on the Nature, and Reason of Things. P. 353.



CHRI-

A Philosophers Prayer.

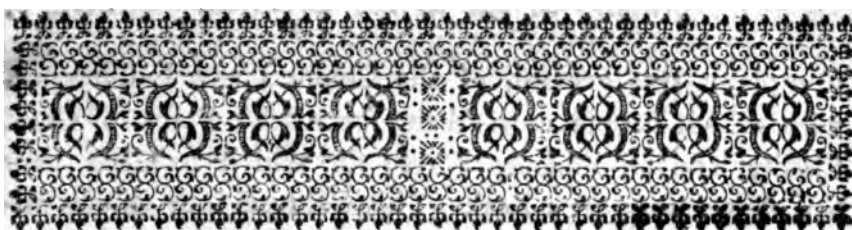
Written by Lindal. recommended by

O First Mover! O cause of causes! O potent-omniscient-incomprehensible, men call God! if thou vouchsafest to my thoughts, the words, or the actions of Man not criminal, in so wretched an animal, prostrate himself before thee, if this be the most ardent prayer that my heart or my tongue can utter, be not unhearing me, O Almighty being! and have mercy upon me!

I find myself placed by thy Providence, in the midst of the universe, where I daily see of many more species, who value themselves they call Reason; paying such a sort of homage to thee, as in my own opinion is altogether worthy of thee. I am told by some of them I ought to believe such things concerning thee. I cannot, as I ^{clearly} ~~ought~~ not give my assent, regard the thoughts of men's hearts; thou knowest, O Almighty being! that why I neither can or dare to believe, as men report of thee, is because most appear to be nothing else but thee.

hide, and to be utterly unworthy of thy
thy Wisdom, and infinite Perfection.
most, I would make this humble petition
namely, that if any of my actions can, so-
far or displease thee, thou wouldst vouchsafe
me clearly and plainly, what is really
thy will. But what am I, that I should
make such a request to thee? How dare I
be or ask to be thus highly favoured above
of mankind? I will endeavour to avoid
thee, and to rest contented in that state of
Darkness, and of Ignorance, wherein it has
been to place that Species to which I belong.
I cannot distinguish good from evil, and
ignorant of what things are most proper for
me not presuming to make any particular request
all I have the confidence to do, is thus humbly
myself before thee, to acknowledge thy
mine thy Wisdom, implore thy Mercy, and
fully to submit myself to thy will, what
or dispose of me, O Almighty Being! in
manner thou pleasest; yet oh forgive
innocent lump of matter, if while it ac-
thy Power, and address thy Wisdom, it like-
comes, tho' with a resigned and submissive
ably to entreat and to implore thy Mercy.

2 Sep. 1735.



CHRISTIANITY *as old as the* CREATION :

O R, T H E

G O S P E L, &c.



C H A P. I.

*That God, at all Times, has given Mankind sufficient
Means of knowing whatever he requires of them ;
and what those Means are.*

A.  HIS early Visit, Sir, gives me Hopes it
will not be a short One.

B. I come to talk with You on a Sub-
ject, which may, perhaps, keep me longer
with You than You desire.

A. YOUR uncommon Temper and Candor, in debating
even the most important Points, will always make your
Conversation agreeable, tho' ever so long ; but pray, what
is to be the Subject of our Morning's Discourse ?

B. I was Yesterday in Company with a great many Clergy-
men, it being our Bishop's primary Visitation ; where the

B

Com-

Complaint was general, of the Coldness and Indifference, with which People receiv'd the speculative Points of Christianity, and all its holy Rites; for which formerly they had shewn so great a Zeal. This Coldness they chiefly imputed to those *Low Church-men*, who lay the main Stress on *Natural Religion*; and withal so magnify the Doctrine of *Sincerity*, as in Effect to place all Religions on a Level, where the Professors are alike sincere. The Promoters of these Notions, as well as the Notions themselves, were expos'd with Warmth; how justly I will not determine, till we have talk'd the Matter over with our usual Freedom: For which Reason, I have made You this early Visit, and wou'd be glad to know the Sentiments of so good a Judge, on these Two important Points; viz. *Sincerity*, and *Natural Religion*.

A. I thank You for this Favour, and shall freely tell You, I so little agree with those Gentlemen in relation to Sincerity, that I think a sincere Examination into religious Matters can't be too much press'd; this being the Only Way to discover True Christianity: The Apostles thought themselves oblig'd, in making Proselytes, to recommend an impartial Search; they both desir'd, and requir'd Men *to judge for themselves, to prove all Things, &c.* this they thought necessary, in Order to renounce a Religion, which the Force of Education had impress'd on their Minds; and embrace another directly contrary to the Notions, and Prejudices, they had imbib'd. Nay, even those very Men, who most ridicule the Doctrine of Sincerity, never fail on other Occasions to assert, that Infidelity is owing to the Want of a sincere Examination; and that whosoever impartially considers Christianity, must be convinc'd of its Truth. And I might add, That cou'd we suppose, a sincere Examination wou'd
not

not always produce this Effect, yet must it always make Men acceptable to God; since that is all God can require; all that it is in their Power to do for the Discovery of his Will. These, in short, are my Sentiments as to This Point; and as to the Other, I think, too great a Stress can't be laid on *Natural* Religion; which, as I take it, differs not from *Reveal'd*, but in the Manner of its being communicated: The One being the Internal, as the Other the External Revelation of the same Unchangeable Will of a Being, who is alike at all Times infinitely Wise and Good.

B. SURELY, Sir, this must be extremely heterodox. Can you believe, that *Natural* and *Reveal'd* Religion differ in nothing, but the Manner of their being convey'd to us?

A. As heterodox as I may seem at present, I doubt not, but by asking you a few Questions, to let you see, I advance nothing in either of these Points without Reason; and in Order to it, I desire to be inform'd, Whether God has not, from the Beginning, given Mankind some Rule, or Law, for their Conduct? And whether the observing That did not make 'em acceptable to him?

B. THERE can be, no Doubt, but the observing such a Law, must have answer'd the End for which it was giv'n; and made Men acceptable to God.

A. WHAT more can any external Revelation do, than render Men acceptable to God? Again,

IF God, then, from the Beginning, gave Men a Religion; I ask, was That Religion imperfect, or perfect?

B. MOST perfect, without Doubt; since no Religion can come from a Being of infinite Wisdom and Perfection, but what is absolutely perfect.

A. CAN, therefore, a Religion absolutely perfect, admit of any Alteration; or be capable of Addition, or Diminution;

tion; and not be as immutable as the Author of it? Can Revelation, I say, add any Thing to a Religion thus absolutely perfect, universal, and immutable? Besides, If God has giv'n Mankind a Law, he must have giv'n them likewise sufficient Means of knowing it; he wou'd, otherwise, have defeated his own Intent in giving it; since a Law, as far as it is unintelligible, ceases to be a Law. Shall we say, that God, who had the forming human Understanding, as well as his own Laws, did not know how to adjust the one to the other?

If God, at all Times, was *willing all Men should come to the Knowledge of his Truth*; cou'd not his infinite Wisdom and Power, at all Times, find sufficient Means, for making Mankind capable of knowing, what his infinite Goodness design'd they shou'd know.

B. I grant You, that God was always willing, that ALL Men shou'd come to the Knowledge of True Religion; and we say, that the Christian Religion being the Only True, and Absolutely Perfect Religion, was what God, from the Beginning, design'd for all Mankind.

A. If so, it follows, That the *Christian* Religion has existed from the Beginning; and that God, both *Then*, and *Ever since*, has continu'd to give all Mankind sufficient Means to know It; and that 'tis their Duty to know, believe, profess, and practise It; so that *Christianity*, tho' the Name is of a later Date, must be as old, and as extensive, as humane Nature; and as the Law of our Creation, must have been Then implanted in us by God himself.

B. It wou'd be too presuming in us poor Mortals, to pretend to account for the Methods Providence takes, in Relation to the Discovery of its Will; and, therefore, a Person of less Moderation, might condemn your Questions as captious, presumptuous, and founded in Heterodoxy.

A. If

A. If God never intended Mankind shou'd at any Time be without Religion, or have false Religions; and there be but One True Religion, which ALL have been ever bound to believe, and profess; I can't see any Heterodoxy in affirming, that the Means to effect this End of infinite Wisdom, must be as universal and extensive as the End itself; or that All Men, at all Times, must have had sufficient Means to discover whatever God design'd they shou'd know, and practise. I do not mean by This, that All shou'd have equal Knowledge; but that All shou'd have what is sufficient for the Circumstances they are in.

B. SINCE You have ask'd me Questions, let me, in my Turn, demand of You, What are your Sentiments in this Matter? Particularly, *What are those Means, which, You suppose, God has, at all Times, given the whole Race of Mankind, to enable them to discover what he wills them to know, believe, profess, and practise?*

A. I ask'd You those few Questions at present, not to determine the Point; but only to let You see, You had no Reason to be surpris'd at my saying, *Natural, and Reveal'd Religion only differ as to the Manner of their being communicated*: I shall now readily answer your Questions; and, as I think it my Duty never to disown my religious Sentiments, so I freely declare, that the Use of *those Faculties*, by which Men are distinguish'd from Brutes, is the Only Means they have to discern whether there is a God; and whether he concerns himself with human Affairs, or has given them any Laws; and what those Laws are? And as Men have no other Faculties to judge with, so their using These after the best Manner they can, must answer the End for which God gave them, and justify their Conduct: For,

IF God will judge Mankind as they are accountable, that is, as they are rational ; the Judgment must hold an exact Proportion to the Use they make of their Reason. And it wou'd be in vain to use it, if the due Use of it wou'd not justify them before God ; and Men wou'd be in a miserable Condition, indeed, if whether they us'd it, or not, they shou'd be alike criminal. And if God design'd all Mankind shou'd at all Times know, what he wills them to know, believe, profess, and practise ; and has giv'n them no other Means for this, but the Use of Reason ; Reason, human Reason, must then be that Means ; for as God has made us rational Creatures, and Reason tells us, that 'tis his Will, that we act up to the Dignity of our Natures ; so 'tis Reason must tell when we do so. What God requires us to know, believe, profess, and practise, must be in itself a reasonable Service ; but whether what is offer'd to us as such, be really so, 'tis Reason alone which must judge ; as the Eye is the sole Judge of what is visible ; the Ear of what is audible ; so Reason of what is reasonable. If then, Reason was giv'n Men to bring them to the Knowledge of God's Will, That must be sufficient to produce its intended Effect, and can never bring Men to take That for his Will, which he design'd, They, by using their Reason, shou'd avoid as contrary to it.

B. If Men, having done all in their Power, all that God requires of 'em to find out his Will, shou'd fall into opposite Sentiments ; must it not be the Will of God that it shou'd be so ? Can God will such a previous Examination, and not will what he foreknows must be the necessary Consequence ?

A. THERE is, I think, no Way to avoid this Objection, of *God's willing Contrarieties* ; but by supposing he requires nothing of Men, but what is founded on the Nature of Things, and the immutable Relations they bear to one another ; and what

what, consequently, they are, as far as concerns 'em, capable of knowing. But this Objection is unanswerable by those, who believe the Will of God is not always thus founded ; but may contain many merely positive Things ; since Men may, after having taken all possible Care to be in the right, have very opposite Sentiments ; and be oblig'd, by the Will of God, to hold, and act Contraries.

B. Tho' this Subject is attended with the utmost Difficulties, yet I find little, or nothing, said to solve 'em ; I, for my Part, know not how to deny Mens being acceptable to God, whatever their Opinions may be, after having us'd all the Means God has endow'd 'em with for the Discovery of his Will ; and yet I don't know how to admit it : For then, what Religion soever Men are of, if they have duly us'd such Means as God ordain'd for the Discovery of his Will ; That, I say, how opposite soever to Christianity, must be the Religion God design'd 'em. And on the other Hand, shou'd I own, that the duly using those Means wou'd have caus'd Men to have been all of one Religion ; yet I can't see how That cou'd be the Christian Religion, except It has existed from the Beginning ; and all Men, at all Times, have had sufficient Means to discover it. For,

If God was always willing, That *All Men should come to the Knowledge of his Truth* ; and there never was a Time, when God intended Men shou'd have no Religion ; or such an imperfect Religion, which cou'd not answer the End of its being instituted by an infinitely wise Legislator ; This seems to my *bewilder'd* Reason to imply, that there was from the Beginning but One True Religion, which all Men might know was their Duty to embrace ; and if This is true, I can't well conceive, how this Character can consist with *Christianity* ; without allowing it, at the same Time, to be *as old*.

old as the Creation. And yet notwithstanding all these seeming Difficulties, I am confident the Christian Religion is the Only True Religion ; but since these Difficulties are of your raising, I may, in Justice, expect that You shou'd solve 'em.

A. THIS, I must own, is a difficult Point ; however, I shall tell you my Sentiments ; which, I, far from being a *Dogmatizer*, am ready to give up, if You can frame any other *Hypothesis* not liable to the same Objections ; or Others equally strong ; tho' I may venture to say, that I take mine to be the Only One, which can give any tolerable Satisfaction to your present Doubts. And therefore, I shall attempt to shew You, That Men, if they sincerely endeavour to discover the Will of God, will perceive, that there's a *Law of Nature*, or *Reason* ; which is so call'd, as being a Law, which is common, or natural, to all rational Creatures ; and That this Law, like its Author, is absolutely perfect, eternal, and unchangeable ; and That the Design of the Gospel was not to add to, or take from this Law ; but to free Men from that Load of Superstition, which had been mix'd with it : So that TRUE CHRISTIANITY is not a Religion of Yesterday, but what God, at the Beginning, dictated, and still continues to dictate to Christians, as well as Others. If I am so happy as to succeed in this Attempt, I hope, not only fully to satisfy your Doubts, but greatly to advance the Honour of *External Revelation* ; by shewing the perfect Agreement between *That*, and *Internal Revelation* ; and by so doing, destroy one of the most successful Attempts that has been made on Religion, by setting the Laws of God at Variance.

BUT

BUT first, I must premise, That in supposing an External Revelation, I take it for granted, that there's sufficient Evidence of a Person being sent from God to publish it; nay, I further own, that this divine Person by living up to what he taught, has set us a noble Example; and that as he was highly exalted for so doing, so we, if we use our best Endeavours, may expect a suitable Reward. This, and every Thing of the same Nature, I freely own, which is not inconsistent with the Law of God being the same, whether internally, or externally reveal'd.

B. YOUR Design, I must own, is highly commendable; but in Order to succeed, you are to prove two Things. *First*, That the supreme Governor of Mankind has given his Subjects an universal Law, which they, when they come to the Use of Reason, are capable of knowing. *Secondly*, That the Divine Precepts must be the same, whether internally, or externally reveal'd. If you prove these two Points, you will entirely clear up my Doubts; but I almost despair of your doing it, since you seem to me to advance a New *Hypothesis*.

A. HEAR the Evidence, and then judge; but before I produce it, lest the suppos'd Novelty of this Opinion may prejudice you, I shall put you in Mind of what Archbishop *Laud* says upon a like Occasion: "That when Errors are grown by Age and Continuance to Strength; again *Episcopos* they who speak for the Truth, tho' far older, are ordinarily challeng'd for bringing in new Opinions; and there's no greater Absurdity stirring this Day in *Christendom*." Now,

By putting me to prove that there is a *Law of Nature*, you, I suppose, have a Mind to hear what I can say on this Subject ; since none that believe there's a God, who governs Mankind, but believe he has given them a Law for the governing their Actions ; and that this is imply'd in the very Notion of Governor and governed ; and consequently, that the Law by which he governs Men, and his Government commenc'd together, and extends alike to all his Subjects. “ Is it not, *as Bishop Tillotson observes*, “ absurd to think, that the Obligation does solely depend “ upon the Revelation of God's Will made known to us “ in the holy Scriptures ; it is plain, Mankind was always “ under a Law before God made an external, or extraordinary Revelation ; else how cou'd God judge the World ? “ Or how should they, to whom the Word of God never came, be acquitted, or condemned at the last Day ; “ for where there is no Law, there can neither be Obedience, nor Transgression.

Pref. to Wil-
kin's of Nat.
Relig.

If, then, it be absurd to suppose, that Men, tho' they liv'd ever so impiously and immorally, cou'd do nothing which God has forbid them ; Or if ever so piously and virtuously, cou'd not do any Thing God has commanded them ; must there not always have been an universal Law so fully promulgated to Mankind, that they could have no just Plea from their Ignorance not to be try'd by it ; and consequently, nothing less than its being founded on the Nature of Things, and the Relation they stand in to God, and one another, visible at all Times to all Mankind, cou'd make it thus universally promulgated. But further to illustrate this Matter, can it be imagin'd, that if God has been so good to all other Animals, as to give them, not in one Country only, but

but in all Places whatsoever, sufficient Means to act for their own Preservation, that he has had less Kindness for the immortal Souls of those made after his own Image, and has not given them at one Time as well as another, and at one Place as well as another, sufficient Means to provide for their eternal Happiness? Or,

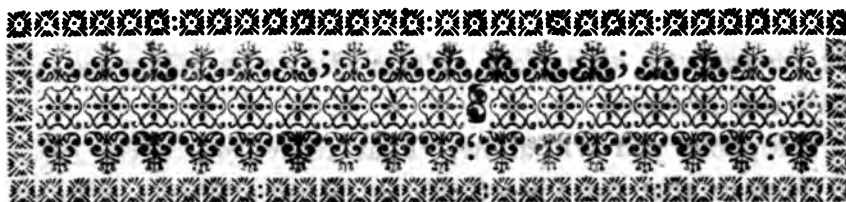
CAN it be suppos'd, an infinitely good and gracious Being, which gives Men Notice by their Senses, what does Good or Hurt to their Bodies, has had less Regard for their immortal Parts, and has not given them at all Times by the Light of their Understanding, sufficient Means to discover what makes for the Good of their Souls; but has necessitated them, or any of them, to continue from Age to Age in destructive Ignorance, or Error? To press this Matter further, let me ask you, Whether there's not a clear and distinct Light, that enlightens all Men; and which, the Moment they attend to it, makes them perceive those eternal Truths, which are the Foundation of all our Knowledge, And is it not God himself, who immediately illuminates them? And what better Reason can you assign, why infinite Wisdom should act thus, except it be to give Mankind standing Rules to distinguish Truth from Falshood; especially in Matters of the highest Consequence, to their eternal as well as temporal Happiness?

THERE has, no doubt, been a great Number of traditional Religions succeeding one another; and as far as we know, there is no traditional Religion, which, except in Name, has continu'd the same for any long Time; and tho' there are a great Number of Sects, who go under the same common Denomination, yet they are almost as much divided among themselves, as if they own'd different Religions, and accord-

ingly charge one another with erring fundamentally ; yet all These agree in acknowledging a *Law of Nature*, and that they are indispensably oblig'd to obey its Dictates : So that This *Light of Nature*, like That of the Sun, is universal ; and wou'd, did not Men shut the Eyes of their Understanding, or suffer Others to blind them, soon disperse all these Mists and Fogs, which arise from false Traditions or false Interpretations of the true Tradition.



C H A P.



CHAP. II.

That the Religion of Nature consists in observing those Things, which our Reason, by considering the Nature of God and Man, and the Relation we stand in to him and one another, demonstrates to be our Duty ; and that those Things are plain ; and likewise What they are.

B.  **HAT** we may the better know whether the *Law*, or *Religion of Nature* is universal, and the Gospel a Republication of It, and not a New Religion ; I desire you will give a Definition of the *Religion of Nature*.

A. By *Natural Religion*, I understand the Belief of the Existence of a God, and the Sense and Practice of those Duties, which result from the Knowledge, we, by our Reason, have of him, and his Perfections ; and of ourselves, and our own Imperfections ; and of the Relation we stand in to him, and to our Fellow-Creatures ; so that the *Religion of Nature* takes in every Thing that is founded on the Reason and Nature of Things. Hence *Grotius* defines the *Law of Nature* to be *Dictatum rectæ rationis, indicans actui alicui, ex ejus convenientia aut disconvenientia cum ipsa natura rationali,*

Lib. 1. c. 1.
Par. 10.

nali, inesse moralem turpitudinem, aut necessitatem moralem, ac consequenter ab auctore naturæ Deo talem actum aut vetari aut præcipi,

I suppose you will allow, That 'tis evident by the *Light of Nature* that there is a God; or in other Words, a Being absolutely perfect, and infinitely happy in himself, who is the Source of all other Beings; and that what Perfections soever the Creatures have, they are wholly deriv'd from him.

B. THIS, no doubt, has been demonstrated over and over; and I must own, that I can't be more certain of my own Existence, than of the Existence of such a Being.

A. SINCE then, it is demonstrable there is such a Being, it is equally demonstrable, that the Creatures can neither add to, or take from the Happiness of That Being; and that he cou'd have no Motive in Framing his Creatures, or in giving Laws to such of them as he made capable of knowing his Will, but their own Good.

To imagine he created them at first for his own sake, and has since requir'd Things of them for that Reason, is to suppose he was not perfectly happy in himself before the Creation; and that the Creatures, by either observing, or not observing the Rules prescrib'd them, cou'd add to, or take from his Happiness.

If then, a Being infinitely happy in himself, cou'd not command his Creatures any Thing for his own Good; nor an All-wise Being Things to no End or Purpose; nor an All-good Being any Thing but for their Good; it unavoidably follows, nothing can be a Part of the Divine Law, but what tends to promote the common Interest, and mutual Happiness of his rational Creatures; and every Thing that does so must be a Part of it.

As

As God can require nothing of us, but what makes for our Happiness; so he, who can't envy us any Happiness our Nature is capable of, can forbid us those Things only, which tend to our Hurt; and this we are as certain of, as that there is a God infinitely happy in himself, infinitely good and wise; and as God can design nothing by his Laws but our Good, so by being infinitely powerful, he can bring every Thing to pass which he designs for that End.

FROM the Consideration of these Perfections, we cannot but have the highest Veneration, nay, the greatest Adoration and Love for this supreme Being; who, that we may not fail to be as happy as possible for such Creatures to be, has made our acting for our *present*, to be the only Means of obtaining our *future* Happiness; and that we can't sin against him, but by acting against our reasonable Natures: These Reflections, which occur to every One who in the least considers, must give us a wonderful and surprizing Sense of the divine Goodness, fill us with Admiration, Transport and Extacy (of which we daily see among contemplative Persons remarkable Instances) and not only force us to express a never-failing Gratitude in Raptures of the highest Praise and Thanksgiving; but make us strive to imitate him in our extensive Love to our Fellow-Creatures: And Thus copying after the Divine Original, and taking God himself for our Precedent, must make us like unto him, who is all Perfection and all Happiness; and who must have an inexhaustible Love for all, who thus endeavour to imitate him.

THE Difference between the supreme Being, infinitely happy in himself, and the Creatures who are not so, is,
That

John 4. 19.

That all his Actions, in Relation to his Creatures, flow from a pure disinterested Love ; whereas the Spring of all the Actions of the Creatures is their own Good. : *We love God, because he first lov'd us* ; and consequently, our Love to him will be in Proportion to our Sense of his Goodness to us. And therefore, we can't in the least vary from those Sentiments, which the Consideration of the divine Attributes implant in us ; but we must in Proportion take off from the Goodness of God, and those Motives we have to love him as we ought.

OUR Reason, which gives us a Demonstration of the Divine Perfections, affords us the same concerning the Nature of those Duties God requires ; not only with Relation to himself, but to ourselves, and one another : Those we shall discern, if we look into ourselves, and consider our own Natures, and those Circumstances God has plac'd us in with Relation to our Fellow-Creatures ; and see what conduces to our mutual Happiness : Of This, our Senses, our Reason, the Experience of Others as well as our own, can't fail to give us sufficient Information.

WITH relation to ourselves, we can't but know how we are to act ; if we consider, that God has endow'd Man with such a Nature, as makes him necessarily desire his own Good ; and, therefore, he may be sure, that God, who has bestow'd this Nature on him, cou'd not require any Thing of him in Prejudice of it ; but on the contrary, that he shou'd do every Thing which tends to promote the Good of it. The Health of the Body, and the Vigor of the Mind being highly conducing to our Good, we must be sensible we offend our Maker, if we indulge our Senses to the Prejudice of These : And because not only all irregular Passions, all unfriendly Affections carry their own
Tor-

Torment with them, and endless Inconveniences attend the Excess of sensual Delights; and all immoderate Desires (human Nature being able to bear but a certain Proportion) disorder both Mind and Body; we can't but know we ought to use great Moderation with Relation to our Passions, or in other Words, govern all our Actions by Reason; That, and our True Interest being inseparable. And in a Word, whoever so regulates his natural Appetites, as will conduce most to the Exercise of his Reason, the Health of his Body, and the Pleasure of his Senses, taken and consider'd together, (since herein his Happiness consists) may be certain he can never offend his Maker; Who, as he governs all Things according to their Natures, can't but expect his rational Creatures shou'd act according to their Natures.

As to what God expects from Man with relation to each other; every One must know his Duty, who considers that the common Parent of Mankind has the whole Species alike under his Protection, and will equally punish him for injuring others, as he would others for injuring him; and consequently, that it is his Duty to deal with them, as he expects they should deal with him in the like Circumstances. How much this is his Duty every One must perceive, who considers himself as a weak Creature, not able to subsist without the Assistance of others, who have it in their Power to retaliate the Usage he gives them: And that he may expect, if he breaks those Rules which are necessary for Mens mutual Happiness, to be treated like a common Enemy, not only by the Persons injur'd, but by all others; who, by the common Ties of Nature, are oblig'd to defend, and assist each other. And not only a Man's own particular Interest, but that of his Children, his Family, and all that's dear to

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him,

him, obliges him to promote the common Happiness, and to endeavour to convey the same to Posterity.

ALL *Moralists* agree, that human Nature is so constituted, that Men can't live without Society and mutual Assistance ; and that God has endow'd them with Reason, Speech, and other Faculties, evidently fitted to enable them to assist each other in all Matters of Life ; That, therefore, 'tis the Will of God who gives them this Nature, and endows them with these Faculties, that they should employ them for their common Benefit and mutual Assistance. And the *Philosophers*, who saw that all Society would be dissolv'd, and Men soon become destitute of even the Necessaries of Life, and be a Prey to one another, if each Man was only to mind himself, and his own single Interest ; and that every Thing pointed out the Necessity of mutual Benevolence among Mankind ; and therefore they judg'd, that Men by their Nature were fram'd to be useful to one another ; *Ad De fin. l. 3. tuendos conservandosq; homines hominem natum esse*, says *Cicero*. And therefore, every Man, for the sake of others as well as himself, is not to disable his Body or Mind by such Irregularities, as may make him less serviceable to them.

In short, considering the Variety of Circumstances Men are under, and these continually changing, as well as being for the most Part unforeseen ; 'tis impossible to have Rules laid down by any *External* Revelation for every particular Case ; and therefore, there must be some standing Rule, discoverable by the *Light of Nature*, to direct us in all such Cases. And we can't be more certain that 'tis the Will of God, that those Effects which flow from Natural Causes shou'd so flow, than we are that 'tis the Will of God, that Men shou'd observe whatever the Nature of Things, and the Relation they have to one another make fit to be observ'd,

serv'd, shou'd be so observ'd ; Or in other Words, we can't but know, if we in the least consider, that whatever Circumstances Men are plac'd in, ~~by the universal Cause of all Things ;~~ that 'tis his eternal and immutable Will, by his placing them in these Circumstances, that they act as These require. 'Tis absurd to imagine we are oblig'd to act Thus in some Cases, and not in others ; when the Reason for acting Thus in all is the same. This Consideration alone will direct a Man how to act in all Conditions of Life, whether *Father, Son, Husband, Servant, Subject, Master, King, &c.* Thus we see how the Reason of Things, or the Relation they have to each other, teaches us our Duty in all Cases whatever. And I may add, that the better to cause Men to observe those Rules, which make for their mutual Benefit, infinite Goodness has sown in their Hearts Seeds of Pity, Humanity and Tendernefs, which, without much Difficulty, cannot be eradicated ; but nothing operates more strongly than that Desire Men have of being in Esteem, Credit, and Reputation with their Fellow Creatures ; not to be obtain'd without acting on the Principles of Natural Justice, Equity, Benevolence, &c.

IN a Word, As a most beneficent Disposition in the supreme Being is the Source of all his Actions in relation to his Creatures ; so he has implanted in Man, whom he has made after his own Image, a Love for his Species ; the gratifying of which in doing Acts of Benevolence, Compassion and good Will, produces a Pleasure that never satiates ; as on the contrary, Actions of Ill Nature, Envy, Malice, &c, never fail to produce Shame, Confusion, and everlasting Self-Reproach.

AND now let any One say, how 'tis possible God could more fully make known his Will to all intelligent Crea-

tures, than by making every Thing within and without them a Declaration of it, and an Argument for observing it.

HAVING thus discover'd our Duty, we may be sure it will always be the same; since Inconstancy, as it argues a Defect either of Wisdom or Power, can't belong to a Being infinitely wise and powerful: What unerring Wisdom has once instituted can have no Defects; and as God is entirely free from all Partiality, his Laws must alike extend to all Times and Places.

FROM these Premises, I think, we may boldly draw this Conclusion, That if Religion consists in the Practice of those Duties, that result from the Relation we stand in to God and Man, our Religion must always be the same. If God is unchangeable, our Duty to him must be so too; if human Nature continues the same, and Men at all Times stand in the same Relation to one another, the Duties which result from those Relations must always be the same: And consequently, our Duty to God and Man must, from the Beginning of the World to the End, always be the same; always alike plain and perspicuous, and can neither be chang'd in Whole or Part; which demonstrates that no Person, if he comes from God, can teach us any other Religion, or give us any Precepts, but what are founded on those Relations. *Heaven and Earth shall sooner pass away, than one Tittle of this Eternal Law shall either be abrogated, or alter'd.*

To sum up all in few Words, As Nature teaches Men to unite for their mutual Defence, and Government was instituted solely for this End; so to make This more effectual, Religion, which reaches the Thoughts, was wholly ordain'd; it being impossible for God, in governing the World, to propose to himself any other End than the Good of the governed; and consequently, whoever acts what is best for him-

himself both in a publick, and private Capacity, does all that either God or Man can require. Thus from the Consideration of our own Imperfections, which we continually feel; and the Perfections of our Creator, which we constantly view in all his Works; we may arrive to the Knowledge of our Duty, both to our Creator and Fellow-Creatures. Hence I think, we may define True Religion to consist in a constant Disposition of Mind to do all the Good we can; and thereby render ourselves acceptable to God in answering the End of his Creation.





C H A P. III.

That the Perfection and Happiness of all rational Beings, supreme as well as subordinate, consists in living up to the Dictates of their Nature.

TO make This, (since all our Happiness depends on it) if possible, more plain ; The Principle from which all human Actions flow is the Desire of Happiness ; and God, who does nothing in vain, would in vain have implanted this Principle, This only innate Principle in Mankind, if he had not given them Reason to discern what Actions make for, and against their Happiness.

B. WHEREIN do you take the Happiness of rational Creatures to consist ? Without knowing That, this Controversy can't be determin'd ; and when 'tis known, our Dispute must soon be ended,

A. THE Happiness of all Beings whatever consists in the Perfection of their Nature ; and the Nature of a rational Being is most perfect, when it is perfectly rational ; that is, when it governs all its Actions by the Rules of right Reason ; for then it arrives to the most perfect, and consequently the happiest State a rational Nature can aspire to ; and every Deviation from the Rules of right Reason being an Imperfection, must carry with it a proportionable Unhappiness ; and a Man's Happiness and Duty must consist

list in the same Things, since no One can be oblig'd to do any Thing that does not some Way or other contribute to his Happiness; and consequently according to the Sense Men have of their own Happiness, and of the Means which will naturally procure it, they will assuredly attain the Knowledge of their respective Duties.

B. If we know wherein the Happiness of God, who is necessarily happy, consists, we might judge wherein consists the Happiness of Man made after God's own Image; and whether Happiness, or Misery are the necessary Consequence of his Actions.

A. Because this is a Point of the highest Consequence, I shall speak my Sentiments (that they may the better pass with you) in the Words of the judicious Dr. Scot, who says,

" That which renders God so infinitely happy in himself, Chrſt. Life Part 2, Vol 1
 " is not so much the Almighty Power he has to defend him- Ch. 1,
 " self from foreign Hurts and Injuries; as the exact Agree-
 " ment of all his Actions with the All-comprehending Rea-
 " son of his own Mind. God loves not himself merely be-
 " cause he is himself, but because he is in all Respects mo-
 " rally good, and his Will and Power perfectly compliant
 " with the infallible Dictates of his own Reason: Hence
 " arises his infinite Complacency in himself, that there's
 " nothing in him but what his own Reason perfectly ap-
 " proves; no Inclinations in his Will, or Nature, but what
 " are exactly agreeable to the fairest Ideas of his own
 " Mind.

If the Perfection, and consequently the Happiness of God, consists in the Purity and Rectitude of his Nature, we, as far as we can arrive to a like Purity and Rectitude, must be so far necessarily happy; since by living according to the Rules of right Reason, we more and more implant
 in

in us the moral Perfections of God, from which his Happiness is inseparable. We then, if I may so say, *live the Life of God*; that is, we, in our Place and Station, live after the same Manner, and by the same Rules as he does in his; and we do what God himself wou'd do was he in our Place; and there wou'd be no other Difference between his Life and ours, but what arises from our different States and Relations; since the same Rules wou'd determine our Wills as determine his Will; and by our repeated Acts of Virtue, we shou'd be continually making nearer and nearer Approaches to the most perfect, and the most happy Being. By this Conduct, we, as the Scriptures assure us, shou'd be made Partakers of the *Divine Nature*; *be born of God*, and *be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect*; and can That be without being as happy as we are perfect? Hence we may contemplate the great Dignity of our *Rational Nature*, since our Reason for Kind, tho' not for Degree, is of the same Nature with That of God's; nay, 'tis our Reason which makes us the Image of God himself, and is the common Bond which unites Heaven and Earth; the Creatures, and the Creator; and if our Happiness is limited, 'tis because our Reason is so: 'Tis God alone, who has an unlimited Reason and Happiness.

Christ. Life. THE excellent Author just now mention'd says, " The
Part 2. Vol. 1. " best Thing we can receive from God is Himself, and
Ch. 1. " Himself we do receive in our strict Compliance with
" the eternal Laws of Goodness; which Laws being tran-
" scrib'd from the Nature of God, from his eternal Righte-
" ousness and Goodness, we do, by obeying them, derive
" God's Nature into our own; so that while we write after
" the Copy of his Laws, we write out the Perfections of
" his Being; and his Laws being the Seal on which he has
" en-

“ engraven his Nature, we, in obeying them, take Impression from them, and stamp his blessed Nature on our “ own.” Which, certainly, must make us necessarily happy, as a contrary Conduct wou’d make us unhappy. And, I think, I may venture to say, that cou’d we suppose God himself to act otherwise, he wou’d then be as unhappy as he now is happy ; and his Omnipotency cou’d not hinder him from being continually expos’d to the Reproach of his own Infallible Reason.

FROM these Premises, I think, we may conclude, that Men, according as they do, or do not partake of the Nature of God, must unavoidably be either happy, or miserable : And herein appears the great Wisdom of God, in making Mens Misery and Happiness the necessary and inseparable Consequence of their Actions ; and that rational Actions carry with them their own Reward, and irrational their own Punishment : This, I think, can’t be deny’d, as long as there are some Actions naturally beneficial to us, and others as hurtful ; and that there’s no Virtue, but what has some Good inseparably annex’d to it ; and no Vice, but what as necessarily carries with it some Evil ; and if our rational Nature is to be the same in the next Life, as it is in this, our Actions must produce Effects of the same Kind, and that too in a much higher Degree.

IN this Life, ’tis true, we can’t be perfectly happy ; as subject to Diseases and Disasters : We are imperfect ourselves, and have none to converse with but imperfect Creatures ; and yet if we act according to the Dictates of right Reason, we shall receive, even here, true inward Comfort and Satisfaction ; and hereafter, when we are freed from those Imperfections, compleat Happiness : On the con-

rary, the Man who abandons his Reason, besides the Misery of all Sorts an irrational Conduct will bring on him, must feel in his Mind, Pain, and Anguish even in this Life; and in the Life to come, when there are no sensual Things to divert his Thoughts, insupportable Grief and Misery.

THO' human Law-givers are forc'd to have Recourse to Punishments, which are not connected with the Things they forbid; yet a Being of infinite Power is not thus straiten'd, but may make one the necessary Consequence of the other: And, indeed, how can it be otherwise, since Good and Evil have their Foundation in the essential Difference of Things, and their Nature is fix'd and immoveable: And consequently, our Happiness depends on the intrinsic Nature of the one, and our Misery on the intrinsic Nature of the other.

As God, whose infinite Wisdom sets him above being deceiv'd, or influenc'd by any wrong Affections, acts in constant Conformity to the Reason and Nature of Things; and 'tis a Contradiction to his Nature for him to do any Thing that is not Fit and Reasonable; so he wou'd have fram'd our Nature in Contradiction to his own, if he had oblig'd us to act otherwise: No, God can never give us Commands repugnant to his own Nature, or require us to do what he himself abhors to do. The End for which God has given us Reason, is to compare Things, and the Relation they stand in to each other; and from thence to judge of the Fitness and Unfitness of Actions; and cou'd not our Reason judge soundly in all such Matters, it cou'd not have answer'd the End for which infinite Wisdom and Goodness bestow'd that excellent Gift; and for which we can't enough adore the Goodness of God.

HAD

HAD God, from Time to Time, spoke to all Mankind in their several Languages, and his Words had miraculously convey'd the same Ideas to all Persons; yet he cou'd not speak more plainly than he has done by the Things themselves, and the Relation which Reason shews there is between them: Nay, since 'tis impossible in any Book, or Books, that a particular Rule cou'd be giv'n for every Case, we must even then have had Recourse to the Light of Nature to teach us our Duty in most Cases; especially considering the numberless Circumstances which attend us, and which, perpetually varying, may make the same Actions, according as Men are differently affected by them, either good or bad: And I may add, that most of the particular Rules laid down in the Gospel for our Direction, are spoken after such figurative a Manner, that except we judge of their Meaning, not merely by the Letter, but by what the Law of Nature antecedently declares to be our Duty, they are apt to lead us wrong: And if Precepts relating to Morality, are deliver'd after an obscure Manner, when they might have been deliver'd otherwise; what Reason can you assign for its being so, but that infinite Wisdom meant to refer us to That Law for the explaining them. Sufficient Instances of this Nature I shall give you hereafter, tho' I must own, I can't carry this Point so far as a learned Divine, who represents the Scriptures more obscure (which One wou'd think impossible) than even the *Fathers*. He tells us, " That a certain Author (viz. *Flac-*
cus Illyricus) has furnish'd us with one and fifty Rea-
 sons for the Obscurity of the Scriptures; adding, " I
 think, I may truly say that the Writings of the Pro-
 phets and Apostles abound with Tropes and Metaphors,
 Types and Allegories, Parables and dark Speeches; and

Pref. to *Rome's*
Apol. &c. p.
 45, 46.

“ are as much, nay, much more unintelligible in many
 “ Places, than the Writings of the Ancients. ” ’Tis well
 Pref. concern. this Author, who talks of People being stark *Bible-mad*
 right Use of the Fathers. stopp’d here ; and did not with a celebrated Wit cry, *The*
 P. 11. *truly illuminated Books are the darkest of all.*
 Tale of a Tub.

THE Writer above-mention’d supposes it impossible, that
 God’s Will shou’d be fully reveal’d by Books ; “ Except,
 Prelim. Dis- “ *says he*, it might be said perhaps without a Figure, that
 sert. to Vincent. “ even the World itself could not contain the Books which
 Lirionf. p. 199. “ should be written.” But with Submission to this Re-
 verend Person, I ca’nt help thinking, but that, (such is the
 divine Goodness) God’s Will is so clearly, and fully ma-
 nifested in the Book of Nature, that he who runs may
 read it.

THIS can’t be deny’d, if the Book of Nature shews us
 in Characters legible by the whole World, the Relation we
 stand in to God and our Fellow-Creatures, and the Du-
 ties resulting from thence ; for then it must teach us the
 whole of our Duty, since it wou’d be unjust and tyrannical
 in any Being, to require more of others than the Relation
 they stand in to him makes it their Duty to pay ; it being
 that Relation alone which gives him his just Power and Au-
 thority. We are encompass’d with many artificial Rela-
 tions, such as *Governor* and *governed*, *Master* and *Servant*,
Husband and *Wife*, &c. and the End of these Relations
 teaches us what they require ; and they being enter’d in-
 to for the sake of each others Assistance, either Party is in-
 jur’d by the others not observing what these Relations de-
 mand, or by exacting more than the End of entering into
 them requires.

Tho’

THO' the Relation we stand in to God, is not artificial, as most are amongst Men, who want each others Assistance; but is natural at least on our Part: yet This does not hinder, but that we may know by Reason the End he had in being related to us as Creator and Governor; and what he requires of his Creatures and Subjects: This the divine Nature which contains in itself all Perfection, and all Happiness, plainly points out to us. And if we are once certain of the End of God's entring into this Relation with Man, we may be as certain from his Wisdom and Goodness, and all his Divine Perfections, that he will require no more of us than the End he had in entring into this Relation requires.

If it would be unjust and tyrannical in an earthly Governor, to exact Things of his Subjects, that do not contribute to the End for which this Relation between them was enter'd into; can we suppose a Governor of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, who has always in his Mind the End for which he governs Mankind, will act the Tyrant, and put them under severe Penalties for not observing such Things as have no Relation to the End for which he created, and governs them?

THERE'S no Relation among Men without a mutual Obligation arising from it; Parents owe a Duty to Children as well as Children to Parents; but are not we, in a stricter Sense, the Children of God, and Parents only Instruments in his Hands? since 'tis God, who from Nothing brings us into Being, frames us after the Manner that best pleases him, imprints on us what Faculties, Inclinations, Desires and Passions he thinks fit: And is not God from his innate Goodness and Equity, under an Obligation to treat us more kindly than Earthly Parents do their best-beloved Children,
who

who beget them without designing it? Whereas God, whose Actions are govern'd by infinite Goodness, could have no Motive to bring us into Being (which of itself is no Blessing) but our Good; and for the same Reason preserves us in Being; nor can so kind and tender a Parent play the Tyrant, and impose Commands on us, which do not flow from the Relations we stand in to him, and to one another.

If we consider what our Reason will inform us, of the Nature of our great Creator and Governor, we can't fail of knowing our Duty; for as Dr. *Scott* justly observes,

Christ. Life P. "If you will serve the great King of the World in such
2. Vol. 1. Ch.
6. p. 321, 322. "Ways as are pleasing and acceptable to him, you must
 "study his Nature, and inform yourselves, which Way his
 "infinite Perfections incline, that you may know how to
 "comport yourselves towards him, and to render him such
 "Services as are agreeable to his Nature; for there's no
 "Rule in the World, but only That of his Nature, by which
 "you can certainly conclude what will please him. — So
 "that in all our Enquiries what is pleasing to God, our last
 "Appeal must be to his Nature, which is the great Stan-
 "dard of Good and Evil; by which we are to measure
 "what is pleasing and displeasing to him."

If then, with this judicious Author, you allow, that we are to measure what is pleasing and displeasing to God, (which takes in the whole of Religion) from what our Reason teaches concerning his Nature, you allow all I contend for.

IN short, if the Relations between Things, and the Fitness resulting from thence, be not the sole Rule of God's Actions, must not God be an arbitrary Being? and then what a miserable Condition will Mankind be in! Since an arbitrary Will might change every Moment, and those Things
 which

which entitl'd Men to God's Favour to Day, might make them incur his Displeasure to Morrow: Nay, he might at the same Time have a secret Will opposit to his reveal'd Will; or have different Wills for every different Person; or might reveal his arbitrary Commands so obscurely, as to cause the utmost Confusion; but if God only commands what the Nature of Things shew to be fit, 'tis scarce possible, that Men (tho' now endlessly divided upon the Account of their different Traditions) should mistake their Duty; since a Mind that's attentive can as easily distinguish *fit* from *unfit*, as the Eye can Beauty from Deformity, or the Ear Harmony from Discord; and if no Commands can alter the Nature of Things, or make that *fit* which is in itself *unfit*, external Revelation must attend the Nature and Relation of Things, and can only speak what those speak. As for Instance, 'tis not in our Power, tho' ever so often commanded, to love the Deity, while we conceive him an arbitrary Being acting out of Humour and Caprice; nor could any Commands, supposing such possible, oblige us not to love him, while we believe him a kind and beneficent Being; so that as long as we have right Notions of God, we can't but love, and adore him as we ought.

Thus, I think, I have fully prov'd from the Nature of God and Man, and the Relations we stand in to him and one another, that the Divine Precepts can't vary; and that these Relations which are the permanent Voice of God, by which he speaks to all Mankind, do, at all Times, infallibly point out to us our Duty in all the various Circumstances of Life.

SHOU'D Revelation require less than those Relations require, wou'd it not be an imperfect Rule? And if it enjoyns more, wou'd it not argue the Author of it to be

be of a tyrannical Nature, imposing on his Subjects, and under most severe Penalties, unnecessary Things; and likewise shew a Design, not of being belov'd; but hated and dreaded? And therefore, those who see the Consequences of Things, describe the Christian Religion as requiring such Things only, as considering the Relations we stand in to God and one another, are apparently for our Good.

THE most accurate Dr. *Barrow* gives this Character of the
 Vol. of Serm. Christian Religion, " That its Precepts are no other than
 p. 82

" such as Physicians prescribe for the Health of our Bodies;
 " as Politicians wou'd allow to be needful for the Peace of
 " the State; as *Epicurean* Philosophers recommend for the
 " Tranquility of our Minds, and Pleasures of our Lives;
 " such as Reason dictates, and daily shews conducive to
 " our Welfare in all Respects; which consequently, were
 " there no Law enacting them, we shou'd in Wisdom choose
 " to observe, and voluntarily impose them on ourselves;
 " confessing them to be fit Matters of Law, as most advan-
 " tagious and requisite to the Good, general and particular;
 " of Mankind.

THAT great and good Man Dr. *Tillotson* says, " That
 Serm. Vol. 1. " All the Precepts of Christianity are reasonable and wise,
 p. 86, " requiring such Duties as are suitable to the Light of Na-
 " ture, and do approve themselves to the best Reason of
 " Mankind; such as have their Foundation in the Nature
 " of God, and are an Imitation of the divine Excellen-
 " cies; such as tend to the Perfection of human Nature,
 " and to raise the Minds of Men to the highest Pitch
 " of Goodness and Virtue. ----- They command no-
 " thing that's unnecessary, they omit nothing that may tend
 " to the Glory of God, or the Welfare of Men, nor do they
 " restrain us in any Thing, but what is contrary to the re-
 " gular

“ gular Inclinations of Nature, or to our Reason, and true
 “ Interest ; they forbid us nothing but what is base and
 “ unworthy to serve our Humours and Passions, to make
 “ ourselves Fools and Beasts. — In a Word, nothing but
 “ what tends to our private Harm, or Prejudice; or to pub-
 “ lick Disorder and Confusion. ”

THE late Dean of *Canterbury*, in a Sermon preach'd in
 Defence of Christianity, says, “ What can be a more power- Boyle's Lect.
p. 26.
 “ ful Incentive to Obedience, than for a rational Creature
 “ clearly to discern the Equity, the Necessity, the Benefit,
 “ the Decency and Beauty of every Action he is call'd to do,
 “ and thence to be duly sensible how gracious a Master he
 “ serves ; One that is so far from loading him with fruit-
 “ less, arbitrary, and tyrannical Impositions, that each Com-
 “ mand abstracted from his Command who issues it, is able
 “ to recommend itself ; and nothing requir'd but what eve-
 “ ry wise Man wou'd choose of his own Accord ; and can-
 “ not, without being his own Enemy, wish to be exempted
 “ from. ” And this Character of Christianity he makes to
 be essential to its being from God, and therefore, must
 make it the same with Natural Religion, which has this
 Character impress'd on it.

“ THERE was none of the Doctrines of our Saviour Serm. before
the Queen on
Christmas Day,
1724.
 “ (*says the late Archbishop of York*) calculated for the Gra-
 “ tification of Mens idle Curiosities, the busying and amu-
 “ sing them with airy and useless Speculations ; much less
 “ were they intended for an Exercise of our Credulity, or
 “ a Trial how far we cou'd bring our Reason to submit to
 “ our Faith ; But as on the one Hand they were plain
 and simple, and such as by their Agreeableness to the ratio-
 “ nal Faculties of Mankind, did highly recommend them-
 “ selves to our Belief ; so on the other Hand they had an

“ immediate Relation to Practice, and were the genuine
 “ Principles and Foundation, upon which all human and
 “ divine Virtues were naturally to be superstructed.” Does
 not every One see, that if the Religion of Nature had been
 put instead of Christianity, these Descriptions wou’d have
 exactly agreed with it.

Christ. Life
 Part 2, Vol. 1.
 Ch. 4, p. 173,
 174.

THE judicious Dr. *Scot* affirms, “ God never imposes
 “ Laws on us *pro Imperio*, as arbitrary Tests and Trials
 “ of our Obedience. — The great Design of them, *says*
 “ *he*, is to do us Good, and direct our Actions to our own
 “ Interest. — This, if we firmly believe, will infinitely
 “ encourage our Obedience; for when I am sure God com-
 “ mands me nothing but what my own Health, Ease, and
 “ Happiness requires; and that every Law of his is both a
 “ necessary and sovereign Prescription against the Diseases
 “ of my Nature, and he could not prescribe less than he
 “ has, without being defective in his Care of my Reco-
 “ very and Happiness; with what Prudence and Modesty
 “ can I grudge to obey him?

NAY, the most considerable Men, even among the
Papists, do not scruple to maintain there’s nothing in Reli-
 gion but what is moral. The Divines of *Port Royal* for
 Pref. to Nouv. Testamen. Instance say, “ All the Precepts, and all the Mysteries that

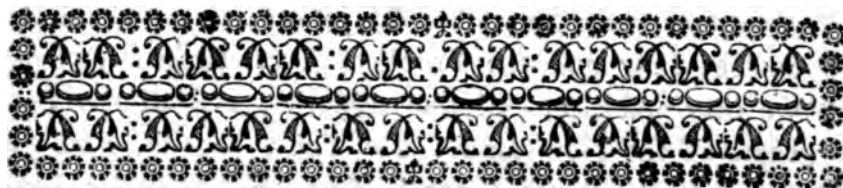
“ are express’d in so many different Ways in the holy Vo-
 “ lumes, do all center in this one Commandment of *loving*
 “ *God with all our Heart*, and in *loving our Neighbours as*
 “ *ourselves*: For the Scripture (it is St. *Austin* who says it)
 “ forbids but one only Thing, which is *Concupiscence*, or
 “ the Love of the Creature; as it commands but one
 “ only Thing, which is *Charity*, and the Love of God:
 “ Upon this double Precept is founded the whole System
 “ of the Christian Religion; and it is unto this, *say they*,
 “ ac-

“ according to the Expression of Jesus Christ, that all the
 “ ancient Law and the Prophets have Reference ; and
 “ we may add also, All the Mysteries, and all the Pre-
 “ cepts of the New Law : *For Love*, says St. Paul, is
 “ *the Fulfilling of the Law* :” And these Divines like-
 wise cite a remarkable Passage of St. *Austin* on this Subject ;
viz. “ He that knows how to love God, and to regulate his
 “ Life by that Love, knows all that the Scripture propounds
 “ to be known :” They also might have quoted a known
 Saying of this Father, *Omnia peccata sunt in universum con-*
tra Rationem & Naturæ Legem. And I might add the Au-
 thority of a greater Man, and a *Papist* too, who says, “ Re-
 “ ligion adds nothing to natural Probity, but the Consola-
 “ tion of doing that for Love and Obedience to our heaven-
 “ ly Father, which Reason itself requires us do in Favour of
 “ Virtue.” And the famous *Pere Quesnelle* says on *Acts* 2.
 21. *Le vrai culte n'est plus attaché à un Peuple, Le Christia-*
nisme est une Religion universelle.

Archbp. of
 Cambray Let-
 tres sur la Reli-
 gion, p. 258.
 a Paris.

B. Do Divines always give this Character of Christianity,
 do they never distinguish it from the Religion of Nature, by
 supposing it contains certain arbitrary Precepts ?

A. WHEN they consider how repugnant 'tis to the Na-
 ture of God to give any arbitrary Commands, then indeed
 the Force of Truth obliges them to declare there's nothing
 in Religion but what tends to the Good of Mankind ; but if
 at any Time they talk otherwise, 'tis for the sake of such
 Things as either directly or indirectly serve their Interest.
 But to remove all Scruples I shall more fully prove,



C H A P. IV.

That not only the Matter of all God's Laws, but the Penalties annex'd to them are for the Good of Mankind; even of those who suffer for the Breach of them.

B.  H O U ' D I allow you, that the Natural Knowledge we have of God is the Foundation of all Religion, and that Arguing from the Divine Attributes is a most certain Way of Reasoning, yet is not God's Glory one of his divine At-
 Prov. 16. 4. tributes? And does not the wisest of Men say, that *God made all Things for himself, and the Wicked for the Day of Evil*; and consequently God's Glory, rather than the Good of Man, occasion'd the Almighty to create Man, and to give him Laws?

A. As to this Text, I shall answer you from Archbishop
 Serm. Vol. 7. Tillotson, that " If by *God's making all Things for himself*,
 p. 19. " be meant, that he aim'd at and intended the Manifesta-
 " tion of his Wisdom, Power, and Goodness in the Crea-
 " tion of the World, 'tis most true, that in this Sense *he*
 " *made all Things for himself*; but if we understand it so,
 " as if the Goodness of his Nature did not move him
 " thereto, but that he had some Design to serve, Ends and
 " Ne-

“ Necessities of his own; upon his Creatures, this is far
 “ from him; but it’s very probable, that neither of these
 “ are the Meaning of the Text, which may be render’d
 “ with much better Sense, and nearer to the *Hebrew* thus;
 “ *God has ordain’d every Thing to that which is fit for it,*
 “ *and the Wicked hath he ordain’d for the Day of Evil;*
 “ that is, the Wisdom of God hath fitted one Thing to an-
 “ other; Punishment to Sin, the Evil Day to the Evil Do-
 “ ers.” This is the Sense that *Grotius*, and most of the
 best Commentators put on the Text. And here let me add,
 that if there are innumerable Places as capable of different
 Interpretations, even with Relation to God and his Attri-
 butes, this sure, will be no Argument not to adhere to
 what the Light of Nature teaches us in this Matter; since
 where Texts may be taken in different Senses, Things are
 as much left to be determin’d by our Reason, as if there
 were no such Texts. And when we meet with Expressi-
 ons of God’s doing any Thing for his own Glory, they
 can only mean, that such is the transcendent Excellency of
 his Nature; such the inexpressible Marks of his Wisdom
 and Power in all his Works, that he cou’d not have gi-
 ven greater had he design’d nothing but his own Glory.
 And when we impute the Glory of all we do to him,
 we thereby signify, that we have no Power, but what we
 derive from him; and that we desire to acknowledge him
 the Author of whatever is praise-worthy in us.

B. Tho’ it be allow’d, That God fram’d his Laws, and
 consequently, the Sanctions that make them Laws, for the
 Good of Man; yet a due Regard to his own Honour, the
 Dignity of his Laws and Government, will oblige him to
 punish those, who violate his Laws, as for an Injury done to
 him-

himself, distinct from the Harm that by the Breach of them accrues to his Creatures.

A. As no Man breaks the divine Laws out of Contempt to his Maker, or imagines he can do God an Injury; so God does not make Laws for one End, and require the observing them for another, that being inconsistent with the Dignity of the divine Legislator, his Laws and Government; but as it was for the sake of Man that he gave him Laws, so he executes them purely for the same Reason; since upon his own Account, he can't be in the least affected, whether his Laws be, or be not observ'd; and consequently in punishing, no more than rewarding, does he act as a Party, much less an injur'd Party, who wants Satisfaction, or Reparation of Honour: And indeed, to suppose it, is highly to dishonour him, since God, as he never can be injur'd, so he can never want Reparation; and he, who is infinitely satisfy'd in himself, can gain no Addition of Satisfaction by his Creatures observing his Laws nor can he, by their not observing them, be reduc'd to a Condition of wanting Satisfaction, or Reparation of Honour, or any of those Things, which, depending on the Opinion of Others, are main Ingredients in human Happiness; and yet even among Men none ought to be punish'd, (since what is past can't be help'd) but to prevent a future Breach of the Law; and all Laws being design'd for the Good of the governed, "The greatest Monarch is not to punish the Breach of his Laws any otherwise, than the most petty State:" And tho' all own, it would be Tyranny in an earthly Governor to multiply Punishments on Pretence of vindicating the Honour of the Legislator; or as the Breach of Law is an Injury done to him, and such like; yet some are not asham'd to impute such Tyranny to God, and thereby take off from that Esteem and Love Men must have for him, did they
be-

believe he only punish'd when, and no further than their Good requir'd.

Do not we bring God down to ourselves, when we suppose he acts like us poor indigent Creatures, in seeking Worship and Honour for his own sake; nay, do we not cloath him, who has neither Parts nor Passions, with the worst of our Infirmities, if we represent him as an ambitious, suspicious, wrathful and revengeful Being.

If we dare consult our Reason, it will tell us that Jealousy in point of Honour and Power, Love of Fame and Glory can only belong to limited Creatures; but are as necessarily excluded from an unlimited, absolutely perfect Being, as Anger, Revenge, and such like Passions; which would make the Deity resemble the weak, womanish, and impotent Part of our Nature, rather than the manly, noble, and generous.

Cou'd God strictly speaking, be made angry, provok'd, or griev'd by the Conduct of us wretched Mortals, he wou'd not enjoy a Moment's Quiet; but must be much more miserable than the most unhappy of his Creatures. Or,

HAD God any Comfort, or Satisfaction to gain from the Thoughts and Actions of his Creatures, he wou'd never have been without an Infinity of them jointly contributing to this End.

If Religion in general, and every Part of it was not useful to Mankind, there wou'd be no Reason why they shou'd know it more than other Animals; who, tho' they have wonderful Talents (in many of which they exceed Men) given them by God for preserving themselves and their Species, yet are utter Strangers to Religion, as a Thing wholly useless to them.

THE Sum of what I have been saying is fully express'd
 Ch. 34. 6. &c. by Job in these Words, *If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? Or if thy Transgressions be multiply'd, what dost thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? Or what receiveth he at thy Hands? Thy Wickedness may hurt a Man as thou art, and thy Righteousness profit the Son of Man.*
 2 Esdr. 8. 34. Or, as Esdras says, *What is Man that thou shouldst take Displeasure at him? Or what is a corruptible Generation, that thou shouldst be so bitter towards it?*

OUR greatest Felicity consists in having such an impartial and disinterested Judge as well as Legislator, that whether he punishes, or rewards, he acts alike for our Good; That being the End of all his Laws, and consequently of the Penalties as well as Rewards which make them Laws; whereas your common Systems of Divinity represent him full of Wrath and Fury, ready to glut himself with Revenge for the Injuries he has suffer'd by the Breach of his Laws.

B. Is not God's Justice as well as his Mercy a divine Attribute, and will not That as much oblige him to punish the Breakers of his Laws, as if he had been, as he is sometimes represented, full of Anger, Wrath, and Revenge?

A. THO' Justice and Mercy can't at the same Time be exercis'd in one and the same Instance on the same Subject; yet your System Writers, lest they shou'd limit these two Attributes in God, extend them alike to all Persons, which is making him neither just, nor merciful; because these Attributes drawing contrary Ways must hinder each other's Effect.

B. I must confess, I do not see how the same Act can be an Act both of Justice and Mercy in relation to the same Person; or how it can be said that God does Justice on a Sinner, when he shews Mercy to him; and yet we
 must

must suppose the Justice as well as Mercy of God to be infinite.

A. THE Justice by which God is righteous in all his Actions, and the Mercy by which he is good or beneficent are infinite, and eternally inherent in the divine Nature; but These oblige not God either to punish, or pardon any further than his infinite Wisdom sees fit; and such Punishing and Pardoning are transient Acts, the Effects of his Will, not Properties belonging to his Nature. Justice and Mercy among Men relate to different Subjects: When the Magistrate punishes a Criminal, 'tis an Act of Justice to the Publick; and when he pardons him 'tis an Act of Mercy to the Criminal, tho' an Act of Injustice to the Publick; except in such Circumstances, where he has Ground to believe that Pardoning him may be no Disadvantage to the Publick; whose Interest it is not to lose a useful Member.

THE greatest Difference in this Case between God and Man is, that the most powerful Monarch on Earth is of the same Nature with his Subjects, and his Good involv'd in the Good of the whole, and by the Breach of his Laws may be injur'd; and as a Party injur'd may exact Reparation and Satisfaction: But This without Blasphemy can't be said of God, whose Nature is infinitely superior to That of Man; and who, as he was infinitely happy in himself before there was any Creature to adore him, or be obedient to his Will; so he must still be such, tho' none of them did obey his Laws, or acknowledge his Being; and therefore, in doing Acts of Justice he can't, like the Monarchs of this World, propose any Security to himself, but acts purely for the Good of his Creatures; and the Effects of his Justice (they never extending to Annihilation) must not only be for the Good of Others, but even of the Persons punish'd; because God,

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whose

whose Love infinitely exceeds that of mortal Parents, chastises his Children, (and all Mankind are alike his Offspring) because he loves them; and designs their Amendment; and the Reason why God in Scripture is said to be *Love*, must be because all his Acts, by what Name soever you call them, are Acts of pure, impartial, and disinterested Love.

ALL Punishment for Punishment's sake is meer Cruelty and Malice, which can never be in God; nor can he hate any Thing he has made, or be subject to such Weakness or Impotence as to act arbitrarily, or out of Spite, Wrath, Revenge, or any Self-Interest; and consequently, whatever Punishment he inflicts, must be a Mark of his Love, in not suffering his Creatures to remain in that miserable State, which is inseparable from Sin and Wickedness.

As God's infinite Goodness appears in the Sanctions as well as Matter of his Laws, so his infinite Wisdom knows how to adjust the Punishment to the Offence; that it may be exactly fitted to produce the desir'd Amendment.

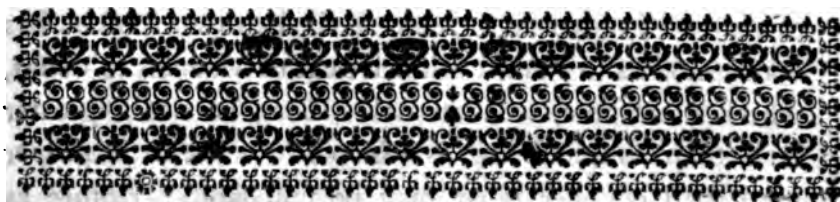
B. DOES not your supposing that God has no other Motive in executing his Laws, than he had in making them; viz. the Good of his Creatures; and that all Punishment must bear an exact Proportion to the Offence it is design'd to amend, strike at the absolute Eternity of Hell-Torments? since there's no Proportion between temporary Injuries done to all Men, and eternal Misery of but one Man; nor can everlasting Torment work Amendment.

A. I shall at present refer you to Dr. Burnet, *de Statu*
 Serm. Vol. 6. *mortuorum*, and only say with Archbishop Tillotson, "The
 p. 211. & p. 621.

" Right that God hath in his Creatures is founded in the
 " Benefits he hath conferr'd on them, and the Obligation
 " they have to him on that Account. Now there's none,
 " who

“ who because he has done a Benefit, can have, by virtue
 “ of that, a Right to do a greater Evil than the Good he has
 “ done amounts to ; and I think it next to Madness to doubt,
 “ whether extreme, and eternal Misery be not a greater
 “ Evil than simple Being is a Good.” But at a proper
 Time I shall consider what may be said from Scripture as
 well as Reason, for the Doctrine of the absolute Eternity of
 Torments; and what will be the Condition of those who
 dye before they are capable of undergoing a Tryal, or know-
 ing any Thing of Religion. A Subject, which, I think, has
 scarce been consider’d by any One.





C H A P. V.

That God requires nothing for his own sake; no, not the Worship we are to render him, nor the Faith we are to have in him.

B.  OUR Arguing from the Nature of God, that every Thing, consequently Faith in him, and even the Worship and Service we render to him, is wholly for our own sake, will hardly go down with the Bulk of Mankind, who imagine, they by those Acts do him some real Service.

A. If they think so, 'tis a Sign they have not been well instructed; the most eminent of our Divines wou'd teach them, That Prayer itself, God knowing before-hand what we will ask, chiefly becomes a Duty, as it raises in us a due Contemplation of the divine Attributes, and an Acknowledgement of his great and constant Goodness, and serves to keep up a constant Sense of our Dependance on him; and as it disposes us to imitate those Perfections we adore in him, in being kind and beneficent to one another. There are few so gross as to imagine, we can direct infinite Wisdom in the Dispensation of Providence, or persuade him to alter those ~~Laws~~ he contriv'd before the Foundation of the World for putting Things in a regular Course.

“ 'Tis,

“Tis, says Archbishop Tillotson, a great Condescension Vol. 7. P. 28.
To 2. 681. and Goodness in him, to accept our imperfect Praises, and ignorant Admiration of him; and were he not as wonderfully good, as he is great and glorious, he wou’d not suffer us to fully his great and glorious Name by taking it in our Mouths; and were it not for our Advantage and Happiness to own and acknowledge his Benefits, for any real Happiness and Glory that comes to him by it, he cou’d well enough be without it, and dispense with us for ever entertaining one Thought of him; and were it not for his Goodness might despise the Praises of his Creatures, with infinitely more Reason than wise Men do the Applause of Fools.”

“To imagine, as Dr. Scot observes, that God needs our Scot’s Christ.
Life. Part 2.
is Vol. 1. Ch. 6. Services, and requires them to serve his own Interest, is to blaspheme his All-sufficiency, and suppose him a poor indigent Being, who for Want of perfect Satisfaction within himself, is forc’d to roam abroad; and raise Taxes on his Creatures, to enrich and supply himself: So that whatsoever some high-flown Enthusiasts may pretend, that ’tis soordid and mercenary to serve God for our Good, I am sure, to serve him for his Good is profane and blasphemous.”

As able a Divine as this, or perhaps any other Age has produc’d, observes, that “Nothing can be more false, or LeClerc’s Conf.
of Incred. Eng.
Transl. p. 219. contrary to the Nature of the Gospel, than to fancy God in part-design’d to shew he was Master, by enjoining some Commands, which have no Relation to the Good of Mankind; Religion was reveal’d for us, and not for God; who, absolutely speaking, neither wants what we think of him, nor the Worship we pay him, but has manifested himself to us, only to make us happy.” And, therefore, if from

Ex-

Excess of Devotion, a Man neglects the Duties of civil Life, he is so far from doing a Thing acceptable to God, that he mistakes the End of Religion, which is to render him as perfect as may be in all moral Duties whatever.

IF any Command was ever given for the sake of God, it must certainly be That relating to the Institution of the *Sabbath*; and yet we find it said, *The Sabbath is made for Man, and not Man for the Sabbath*: So true is it in Divinity as well as Politicks, that *The Good of the People is the supreme Law*.

IN short, the Worship God requires, is either for his own sake, which supposes his Happiness some Way or other depends on it; or else (except he requires Things to no Purpose) for the sake of Men, to raise and keep in their Minds the Contemplation of an infinitely good Being, and of his Laws, all founded on a disinterested Love to the whole Race of Mankind. To imagine the Worship of God is ordain'd on any other Account, not only destroys one of the greatest Motives of Mens doing Good to one another; but supposes God not sufficient for, or infinitely happy in himself; but subject to the Passions of ambitious and vain-glorious Mortals.

THE Generality of Christians not only believe, that in worshipping God they do him real Service, but think he is extremely uneasy, if publick Worship is not perform'd in such a Manner, and with such Rites and Ceremonies; and being endlessly divided about these Trifles, think they make their Court to Heaven, and highly oblige an omnipotent Being, in destroying those formidable Enemies of God, who presume, without their Leave, to worship him after that Manner they judge agreeable to his Will. And,

THERE

THERE are no Measures, tho' ever so destructive, but what They, who do not consider the End of God's Laws, may be brought into; as all History sufficiently proves. The *Jews* not only thought that doing the greatest Good on their Sabbath, was profaning the Day; but were so superstitious as to think, that all Self-defence was then unlawful; and therefore durst not lift up their Hands against their Enemies, who butcher'd them as they pleas'd: And many of the primitive Fathers thought the Gospel forbid all Self-defence; and herein they are follow'd by a modern Sect, who are their strict Imitators in most Things. Maccab. 2.

'TIS no Wonder, if some Ecclesiasticks have not been very forward to teach People, that what Worship God requires of them, is for their own Sakes; since then they cou'd not on Pretence of that Worship, have claim'd such Powers and Privileges, as are inconsistent with the common Good; and People might then think it their Duty so to regulate Matters as that their Priests, upon the whole, considering the Charge of maintaining them, and other Incidents, shou'd do more Good than Hurt; which can never happen, till Men are taught 'tis their Duty to do Good to all, notwithstanding their widest Differences as to Worship, or any other Matter of meer Religion; and 'tis to the Honour of our Clergy at present, that so many of them now endeavour to infuse such human and benevolent Principles into a People, who not long since, thought they shew'd a sufficient Zeal for Religion, in hating Those their Priests hated, without knowing wherefore; and sed by their Pulpit Invectives, thought it their Duty to pull down Houses of religious Worship, and were ready at the Direction of their impious Leaders, to have perpetrated worse Crimes.

B. THERE'S

B. THERE'S one Difficulty, which to me seems insuperable, how to make the Faith requir'd by the Religion of Nature and of the Gospel, to have the same Views, and tend to the same End.

A. IF Faith in God himself, no more than in any other Act of Religion, is requir'd for God's sake, but our own; can Faith in One sent by God be requir'd for any other End? Especially considering, that no Person is ever the more known to Posterity, because his Name is transmitted to them; when we say, *Cæsar* conquer'd *Pompey*, we having no Idea of either can only mean, Some-body conquer'd Some-body; and have we more distinct Ideas of *Jesus* and *Pilate*? And tho' we had a personal Idea of the former, he cou'd receive no Advantage or Disadvantage by what we thought of him. And if Faith in him was requir'd for a Cause antecedent to his being so sent, founded in his and our Nature, and the Relation we always stood in to him; wou'd not the eternal Reason of Things have made it manifest? That which concern'd all, must be knowable by all, for which Reason the Apostle says, *That which may be known of God* (and none can know That which may not be known) *was manifest in the Gentiles.* And,

THE End of Christ's Coming seems not to teach Men new Duties, but (Repentance being the first Thing preach'd by him and his Apostles both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*) to repent of the Breach of known Duties. And *Jesus* does not say, He was sent to all *Israel*, but to the lost Sheep of the House of *Israel*; and that the Son of Man is come — 18. 11. to save that which was lost: And his Parable about the lost Sheep, suppos'd All were not lost. And when it was Luke 15. 7. objected to him, that he kept Company with Sinners, he owns

owns the Charge, and says, *The whole need no Physician*, Mat. 9. 12, *but they that are sick*; which wou'd have been an improper Answer, if he thought that All stood in Need of him, and his spiritual Physick. And to confirm this, he adds, *I am not come to call the righteous, but Sinners to Repentance*; Ib. Ver. 13, and that *There's more Joy in Heaven for one Sinner that repents, than ninety nine just Persons that need no Repentance.* Which is dividing Mankind into two Parts, the *whole* or *righteous*, and the *sick* or *Sinners*; and that his Business was intirely with the latter. The not observing this Distinction has been the Occasion of many uncharitable and gross Mistakes; and 'tis somewhat strange, that Jesus, who best knew how far his Commission extended, shou'd not be credited in this Matter; especially considering that in Religion there are no *Nostrums*, or Secrets, but all may know what God requires of all; and there is but one universal Remedy for all sick Persons, *Repentance* and *Amendment*. And if God, who is no Respector of Persons, will judge the World in Righteousness; and they that in every Nation fear him, and work Righteousness shall be accepted of him; they, certainly, are whole, and need no Physician, who do of themselves what will make them acceptable to him; living as those whom Christ came to reform were taught to live: Is it not absurd to suppose, that till then none had sufficient Means given them to answer the End for which all were created?

THE Catholick Epistle of St. *Barnabas* will inform you of the Sentiments of the Ancients on this Head. This great Apostle (as translated by Dr. *Wake*) says, "That Jesus, when *Wake's Transl.* §. 5. p. 272. " he chose his Apostles, which were afterwards to publish " his Gospel, took Men who had been very great Sinners; " that thereby he might plainly shew, that *He came not to call* Mat 9. 13. *the*

the righteous, but Sinners to Repentance. The Words are fuller in the Original, ὅτις ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀμαρτιῶν ἀνομιώτερος.

B. THIS may be a forg'd Passage.

A. Origen owns it to be genuine, for when Celsus (I will
 Origen cont. give you his Words in the *Latin* Translation) says, *Jesum af-*
 Celsus. l. 1. *citis decem undecimve famosis hominibus, publicanis nautisque*
 P. 47. *nequissimis, cum his ultro citroque fugitasse, corrogantem cibos*
 lb. p. 49. *sordide ac turpiter.* Origen says, Extat sane in Barnabæ
 Catholica Epistola scriptum, *Jesum ad Apostolicam functionem*
elegisse homines omni iniquitate iniquiores. And it may
 be said in Support of St. Barnabas, that the Apostles first be-
 came Jesus's Disciples upon temporal Motives ; and the Be-
 lief of Christ's temporal Kingdom was so firmly rooted in
 them, that Jesus neither during his Life, nor even after his
 Resurrection was able to remove it. At the last Supper there
 was a Strife amongst them, *Who should be accounted the*
 Lake 22, 24. *greatest?* " The meanest (as Bishop Parker expresses it)
 " hoped at least to have been made Lord Mayor of *Caper-*
 " *naum.*" And even at his Ascension the only Question his
 A&S 1. 6. Disciples ask'd was, *Lord, wilt thou at this Time restore*
again the Kingdom to Israel?

BUT to take away all Subterfuges, what can be more re-
 quir'd than those Qualifications as will make Jesus in the
 last Day declare, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the*
Kingdom prepared for you from the Beginning of the World?
 And what are those Qualifications, but living up to the
 Law of Reason, in exercising Acts of Benevolence, Good-
 ness, &c. ? That this was the *Unum necessarium* is plain
 from his Answer, *Depart from me ye that work Iniquity,*
 made to those who had omitted these Things, tho' they
 pleaded, *They had prophesied in his Name, and in his Name*
 Mat. 7. 22, 23. *cast*

cast out Devils, and done many wonderful Works. St. Paul in the first Chapter to the *Romans* is very large, in shewing that the *Gentiles* cou'd not plead Ignorance of their Duty, either to God or Man, and as sinning against Knowledge were inexcusable ; and persuing the same Subject in the second, he says, that *God who is no Respector of Persons* will deal with every One both *Jew* and *Gentile* according to their Deeds ; and those by which they are to be judg'd are either moral or immoral ; and had there been any Thing else requir'd by the written Law, it cou'd not be said that *the Gentiles*, who were not ignorant of their Duty either to God or Man, *did by Nature the Things contained in the Law.*

AND does not St. Paul, in another Place, put our future State on the same Foot, in supposing we shall be dealt with at the last Day *according to what we have done in the Body*, 2 Cor. 5. 10. *whether good or bad.* In short, if the Tree is to be known by its Fruit, and it brings forth good Fruit, the Means by which this good Fruit is produc'd are not material ; but if it does not, no Means whatever can hinder it from being *hewn down, and cast into the Fire.* “ The grand deciding Mat. 7. 19. Question (*says Dr. South*) at the last Day will be, not Serm. Vol. 3. p. 174. “ what you have said, or what you have believ'd ; but what “ you have done more than others. God is pleas'd to vouch-Ib. p. 172. “ safe the best he can give, only to the best we can do. ” But to go to the Bottom of this Matter,

FAITH consider'd in itself can neither be a Virtue, or a Vice ; because Men can no otherwise believe than as Things appear to them : Nay, can there be an higher Affront to God than to suppose, he requires Men to judge otherwise than the Faculties he has given them enable them to do ? Or what can be more absurd than to imagine, that God will shew his Favour to one for believing what he could

not but believe; and his Displeasure to another for not believing what he could not believe; and therefore Faith is only to be esteem'd by the Works it produces; for the strongest Faith may be worse than no Faith at all. *The Devils themselves*, who are held the most wicked Beings in the Universe) *believe, and tremble*. Happy had it been for *Christendom*, if Zeal for, what the prevailing Parties call'd, *The Orthodox Faith*, had made none but themselves to tremble.

Dr. *Whitby* expresses himself very accurately on this Point, "Belief, or Disbelief can neither be a Virtue, or a Crime in any One, who uses the best Means in his Power of being inform'd. If a Proposition is evident, we cannot avoid believing it; and where is the Merit or Piety of a necessary Assent? If it is not evident, we cannot help rejecting it, or doubting of it: And where is the Crime of not performing Impossibilities, or not believing what does not appear to us to be true?" What worse Opinion can we have of the divine Goodness, than to imagine a mean Denial of our Reason, or a wretched Affectation of believing any Point too hard for our Understanding, can entitle us to the Favour of God.

IF Charity, which comprehends doing all possible Good to our Fellow-Creature, is to be destroy'd for the sake of Faith; or if Incapacities, Fines, Imprisonments, Rods, Gibbets, Racks, and Fire, are Marks of Charity, the Christian World has outdone all Mankind in Acts of Charity; but the Description St. *Paul* gives of Charity, is so far from requiring us to make others suffer, that Itself *suffers long, seeks not her own, bears all Things, endures all Things*; and strictly enjoins us so to do.

1 Cor. 13.

HERE

HERE is the Practice of the Christian World on the Side of Faith, sacrificing Charity, and all that's valuable to it ; and on the other Side, Christ and his Apostles preferring Charity before it. St. Paul, speaking of himself, says, *Tho' I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge ; And tho' I have all Faith, and could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing : Or tho' I give my Body to be burnt (which shews the highest Act of Faith) and have not Charity, it profiteth nothing.* ^{1 Cor. 13.} And in another Place he says, *Above all Things put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfection.* ^{Col. 3. 14.} And again, *The End of the Commandment is Charity ; and Love is the Fulfilling of the Law.* ^{1 Tim. 1. 5.} And, *If any provide not for his own, especially those of his own House (which is but one Species of Charity) he has denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel.* ^{Rom. 13. 10.} And St. Peter likewise speaks as highly of it in saying, *Above all Things have fervent Charity among yourselves, for Charity shall cover a Multitude of Sins ;* ^{1 Tim. 5. 8.} which can't be said of Faith, because *That without Charity profiteth nothing ;* in not answering the End for which it was given. And St. James calls Love *the Royal Law.* And St. John says, *If any Man says I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar.* ^{1 Pet. 4. 8.} And is not he likewise a Liar, who shews all the Marks of Hatred to his Brother, and yet pretends to love him, and makes those very Marks an Argument of his Love. ^{James 2. 8.} In Jesus Christ, says the Apostle Paul, *neither Circumcision, nor Uncircumcision availeth any Thing, but Faith which worketh by Love.* ^{1 John 4. 20.} For all the Law is fulfilled in one Word, even — ^{Ver. 14.} in this, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* And Christ, in saying, *By this shall all Men know ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another,* ^{John 13. 35.} supposes Mens loving one another so essential to Christianity, as by that Token alone all

all Men may know who are his Disciples ; and if they who thus love one another are of Course his Disciples, whose Disciples then are They, who, as all Men know, make People hate, and harras one another ; and pretend Christ's Commission for so doing?

Origen speaking of the Faith of Christians, cou'd not (was there any Thing peculiar in their Faith) have said,
Origen contra " 'Tis the Conformity of our Faith with the common in-
Colossim. l. 3. " nate Notions of all Mankind, that has given it Entrance
 135. " into the Minds of candid and ingenuous Hearers. And,

OUR Divines (since the Liberty they enjoy has enabl'd them to think, and speak their Thoughts more freely than formerly) when they write in Defence of Christianity, endeavour to shew that the Faith the Scripture requires, is conformable to what *Origen* calls, *The common, and innate Notions of Mankind*. I do not find, that the Dean of *Sarum* is censur'd for affirming in Defence of Christianity, that

Origin of Mo- " The Scripture Notion of Faith is very plain and obvious,
ral Evil. p. 90. " viz. not a speculative and philosophical, but a religious
 " and practical Faith ; and 'tis built on this Principle, That
 " God is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently
 " seek him ; That religious Faith is a full Conviction of
 " Mind, that an eternal, immense Being, infinitely wise,
 " just, and good, not only actually exists, but is the Go-
 " vernor of the World ; prescribes Laws to the Conscien-
 " ces, and to the Actions of Men ; takes Notice of their
 " Compliance with, or Transgression of them ; and will
 " certainly reward, or punish them, according as their
 " Works have been. To live under this Sense and Expec-
 " tation, is to live a Life of Faith, and is co-incident with
 " a Life of Virtue. All the Species, or particular Instan-
 " ces of Faith may be reduc'd to this, as so many Branches
 " spring-

“ springing from it ; And to explain them in any other
 “ Sense, as if Faith and Reason were oppos’d to each other,
 “ and Religion and Virtue two different Things, is to blind
 “ Mens Understandings, and to confound the plainest, and
 “ most numerous Texts of Scripture.

ANOTHER learned Divine, in Defence of the Christian
 Religion, says, “ If it should happen, that we cannot so sa- Nys of Nat. & Reveal. Relig. p. 127.
 “ tisfactorily evince the Certainty of the Scripture-History
 “ against scrupulous, nice, and sceptical Wits, yet we find
 “ ourselves oblig’d to the Belief and Practice of what is re-
 “ ally the Christian Religion ; because ’tis nothing else, as
 “ to the Faith and Morals of it, but Natural Religion.

THE great *Grotius*, in a Discourse own’d to be the best
 that was ever writ in Defence of Christianity, lays it down
 as a Maxim, that “ ’Tis absolutely repugnant to the Good-
 “ ness of God, that those, who without respect to worldly Grotius de Ve- rit. lib. 6. Sect. 2.
 “ Advantage, seek after the Way which leads to eternal
 “ Happiness ; imploring withal the divine Assistance, and
 “ submitting themselves intirely to his Providence, should
 “ not be able to find it.” And if this is too evident to be
 “ deny’d, can there be any Thing either in relation to Faith
 “ or Manners in the Way that leads to eternal Happiness,
 “ but may be found at all Times and Places of every One,
 “ who diligently searches after it.

AND an eminent Divine, who is not look’d on to have
 altogether so extensive a Charity as *Grotius*, yet says, “ I
 “ think we may pronounce safely in this Matter, That the South’s Sermon. Vol. 1. p. 298.
 “ Goodness and Mercy of God is such, that he never de-
 “ ferts a sincere Person, nor suffers any one that shall live
 “ (even according to these Measures of Sincerity) up to
 “ what he knows, to perish for Want of any Knowledge
 “ necessary ; and what is more, sufficient to save him.”
 Which

Which supposes no Faith, or Knowledge necessary to Salvation, but what All are capable of acquiring by Virtue of that *Light, which lighteth every Man that cometh into the World.* And our Saviour himself says, *Seek, and ye shall find.* By this you may see what Faith is requir'd, and for what End.

John 1. 9.

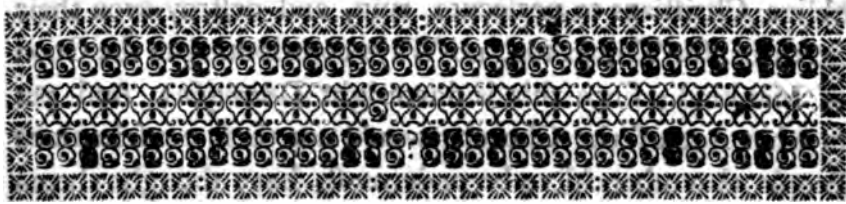
Mat. 7. 7.

If Man, as our Divines maintain against *Hobbs*, is a social Creatnre, who naturally loves his own Species, and is full of Pity, Tendernefs, and Benevolence; and if Reason, which is the proper Nature of Man, can never lead Men to any Thing but universal Love and Kindnefs, and there be no Part of Natural Religion, or any Faith it requires, but highly tends to improve this kind and benign Temper; how comes it to pass, that what is taught for Religion in so many Places of *Christendom*, has transform'd this mild and gentle Creature into fierce and cruel; and made him act with Rage and Fury against those who never did, or intended him the least Harm? Is not this chiefly owing to such a *Faith* as works not by Love; and such a Zeal as, not being according to Knowledge, has destroy'd all good Works; and is utterly inconsistent with the End of all Religion. But no Wonder, if Men, who most uncharitably damn one another for such Matters of Faith as they dare not trust Reason to judge of, shou'd hate, and persecute each other on the same Account.

THE *Epicureans*, tho' they had exalted Notions of their Gods, yet because they asserted it beneath their Dignity to concern themselves with human Affairs, were at all Times censur'd as Atheists; which shews that 'twas accounted much the same to believe no Gods, as to believe them useless to Mankind: But certainly, believing the Deity to be indolent, can't be so bad as believing him so cruel, as to oblige

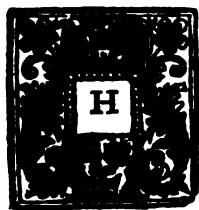
oblige Christians to persecute, ruin, and destroy even their Brethren, for Things too, no Ways contributing to the Good of Mankind ; since this is downright *Demonism* : And yet in what Age of the Church, wou'd not those conscientious People that chanc'd to be undermost, have thought themselves happy, if the Men in Power had not had a worse Notion of the Deity than That of Indolence.





C H A P. VI.

That the Religion of Nature is an absolutely perfect Religion; and that external Revelation can neither add to, nor take from its Perfection; and that True Religion, whether internally or externally reveal'd, must be the same.



HAVING prov'd, That God requires nothing for his own sake; I shall now, the Way being thus prepar'd, shew you, *That the Religion of Nature is absolutely perfect; and that external Revelation can neither add to, nor take from its Perfection*: And in Order to it let me ask you, Why you believe the Gospel a Law of absolute Perfection, incapable of any Addition, Diminution, or Alteration?

B. BECAUSE 'tis the last Law of God's giving.

A. WAS it not such in itself, That cou'd not make it so; since the Law given to the Jews was for many Ages the Only External Law: And yet, I suppose, you grant that this abrogated Law was far from deserving such a Character; but were there any Thing in this Argument, it makes wholly

wholly for the Law of Nature, since That is not only the first, but the last Law of God's giving ; if That can be said to be last, which is eternal : A Law, by which God governs his own Actions ; and by which he expects all the rational World shou'd govern Theirs. And therefore, notwithstanding the Promulgation of the Gospel, he continues daily to implant it in the Minds of all Men, Christians as well as Others ; and consequently, 'tis as necessary for them as for Others ; as necessary since, as before the Coming of Christ : And I may add too, not only necessary to be observ'd in this World, and ten Thousand more, were there so many ; but in Heaven itself, and that too for ever.

B. SHOU'D I grant that my Argument, from the Gospel's being the last Law of God's giving, does not fully prove its absolute Perfection ; yet it will undeniably follow from the great Agreement there is between That and the Law of Nature, it neither forbidding what That requires, nor requiring what That forbids ; and in a Word, containing nothing in it unworthy, but every Thing worthy, of an absolutely-perfect Law-giver.

A. IN saying This, you own the Law of Nature to be the Standard of Perfection ; and that by It we must judge antecedently to any traditional Religion what is, or is not a Law absolutely perfect, and worthy of such a Being for its Legislator.

B. INDEED, it must be own'd, that Divines as well as Others, make the same Concessions in relation to Natural Religion, which Dr. *Prideaux* does in his celebrated Letter to the *Deists* at the End of *Mahomet's* Life : " Let what is
 " written in all the Books of the New Testament be try'd P. 127.
Edit. 7.
8vo.
 " by That which is the Touch-stone of all Religions ; I
 " mean that Religion of Nature and Reason, which God
 " has

“ written in the Hearts of every one of us from the first
 “ Creation ; and if it varies from it in any one Particular,
 “ if it prescribes any one Thing, which may in the minutest
 “ Circumstances thereof be contrary to its Righteousness, I
 “ will then acknowledge this to be an Argument against us;
 “ strong enough to overthrow the whole Cause, and make
 “ all Things else that can be said for it totally ineffectual
 “ for its Support.

A. I desire no more than to be allow'd, That there's a Religion of Nature and Reason written in the Hearts of every One of us from the first Creation ; by which all Mankind must judge of the Truth of any instituted Religion whatever ; and if it varies from the Religion of Nature and Reason in any one Particular, nay, in the minutest Circumstance, That alone is an Argument, which makes all Things else that can be said for its Support totally ineffectual. If so, must not Natural Religion and external Revelation, like two Tallies, exactly answer one another ; without any other Difference between them, but as to the Manner of their being deliver'd ? And how can it be otherwise ? Can Laws be imperfect, where a Legisslator is absolutely perfect ? Can Time discover any Thing to him, which he did not foresee from Eternity ? And as his Wisdom is always the same, so is his Goodness ; and consequently from the Consideration of both these his Laws must always be the same. — Is it not from the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of God, that you suppose the Gospel a most perfect Law, incapable of being repeal'd, or alter'd, or of having Additions ; and must not you own the Law of Nature as perfect a Law, except you will say, that God did not arrive to the Perfection of Wisdom and Goodness till about seventeen Hundred Years since.

To

To plead, That the Gospel is incapable of any Additions, because the Will of God is immutable, and his Law too perfect to need them, is an Argument, was Christianity a new Religion, which destroys itself; since from the Time it commenc'd, you must own God is mutable; and that such Additions have been made to the All-perfect Laws of infinite Wisdom, as constitute a New Religion. The Reason why the Law of Nature is immutable, is, because it is founded on the unalterable Reason of Things; but if God is an arbitrary Being, and can command Things meerly from Will and Pleasure; some Things to Day, and others to Morrow; there is nothing either in the Nature of God, or in the Things themselves, to hinder him from perpetually changing his Mind. If he once commanded Things without Reason, there can be no Reason why he may not endlessly change such Commands.

I think, no Man has more fully done Justice to the Law of Nature, than a Divine of that Church which requires so many Things contrary to that Law; I mean the celebrated *Charron*, in his *Treatise of Wisdom*, whose Authority is certainly not the less for being translated by the late Dean of *Canterbury*: He says, "The Law of Nature, by which I L. 2. c. 3.
" mean Universal Reason and Equity, is the Candle of our P⁶⁹

" Maker, lighted up in every Breast, to guide, and shine
" perpetually. This is the Dictate of God himself, he
" is the King, and this the Fundamental Law of the
" Universe; a Ray and Beam of the divine Nature, which
" flows from, and has a necessary Connexion and Depen-
" dance upon that eternal and immutable Law, which the
" Almighty prescribes to his own Actions. A Man, who
" proceeds on this Principle is his own Rule; for he acts in
" Agreement with the noblest, and most valuable Part of
" his

" his Nature: This Man's Honesty is essential to, and in-
 " separable from him, not precarious and uncertain, and
 " owing merely to Chance and Occasion; for this Light
 " and Law is born with, and bred in us; a Piece of our
 " Frame and Constitution; and from thence obtains the
 " Name of Nature, and the Law of Nature: Such a Man,
 " by Consequence, will be a good Man constantly, and
 " at all Times, his Virtue will be uniform, and every Place,
 " every Emergency will find him the same; for this Law
 " of Nature is perpetual, the Obligation of it is lasting and
 " inviolable; the Equity and Reason of it are eternal, writ-
 " ten in large and indelible Characters, no Accident can de-
 " face them, no Length of Time waste, or wear them out.
 " — These first Principles, which are the Ground of all
 " moral Institutions, admit of no Change, no Increase, no
 " Abatement, no Fits, no Starts, no Ebbings and Flowings.
 " — Why then, vain Man, dost thou trouble thyself to
 " seek abroad for some Law or Rule to Mankind? What
 " can Books, or Masters tell thee, which thou might'st not
 " tell thyself? What can Study, or Travel shew, which,
 " without being at the Expence of so much Pains, thou
 " might'st not see at Home, by descending into thy own
 " Conscience, and hearkening attentively to its own Ad-
 " monitions?

" To what Purpose is all this Labour and Cost? The
 " toilsom Tumbling over of Codes and Institutes? —
 " The two Tables of *Moses*, the twelve Tables of the *Greeks*,
 " the Law written in the Heart of them who had no Law,
 " and in short all the Rules of Equity and good Laws, that
 " have any where been enacted, and obtained in the World,
 " are nothing but Copies and Transcripts produc'd in open
 " Court, and publish'd from that *Original*, which thou
 " keepest

“ keepest close within thee ; and yet all the While pretend-
 “ est to know nothing of the Matter, stifling and suppress-
 “ ing as much as in thee lieth the Brightness of that Light,
 “ which shines within thee: As this invifible Fountain with-
 “ in is more exuberant and plenteous, fo it is more lively,
 “ pure, and strong, than any of the Streams deriv’d from
 “ it ; of which we need but this fingle Testimony, That
 “ when any Difputes arife about the right Meaning of any
 “ pofitive Law, the constant, and beft Method of under-
 “ ftanding the Equity and true Intent of it, is by running
 “ back to its Head, and observing what is moft agreeable
 “ to the Law of Nature ; This is the Test and Touch, This
 “ is the Level, and the Truth, by which the reft are to be
 “ judged.

AND in Truth all Laws, whether the Law of Nations, or
 Thofe of particular Countries, are only the Law of Na-
 ture adjusted, and accommodated to Circumftances ; nor can
 Religion, even in relation to the Worfhip of God, as it
 is a reasonable Service, be any Thing, but what neceffarily
 flows from the Confideration of God, and the Creatures.
 ’Twas this made the great Mr. *Selden* fay, in an Expreffion
 fomewhat homely, “ That Men look after Religion, as the *Table-Talk*;
 “ Butcher did after his Knife, when he had it in his Mouth. *P. 162.*

THE Religion of Nature is fo entirely calculated for the
 Good of human Society, that tho’ a Man, hurry’d with the
 Violence of his Paflions, breaks it himfelf, yet he wou’d
 have all Others moft ftrictly obferve it ; and accordingly all
 Legislators punifh the Breach of it : Whereas no Man re-
 jects any pofitive Inftitution himfelf, but is willing that all
 others fhould do fo too ; which plainly fhews, Men do not ap-
 prehend it to be for the general Good of Mankind. And the
 contending Parties in Religion, with equal Confidence, cry,
 “ That

“ That if our Religion be not true, God must be wanting
 “ to Mankind, in what concerns their eternal Happiness ;
 “ he must be wanting to himself, and to his own Attributes
 “ of Goodness, Justice, and Truth : It’s repugnant to the
 “ very Notion of a God, to let Men be ignorant in a Matter
 “ of such Importance without any Help or Remedy.” This
 Reasoning, if true, necessarily infers some universal Law
 knowable at all Times ; and can’t be apply’d to any partial
 Religion unknown to the World for many Ages ; and, as not
 being discoverable by Reason, still unknown to the greatest
 Part of it.

IN a Word, if the highest internal Excellence, the great-
 est Plainness and Simplicity, Unanimity, Universality, Anti-
 quity, nay, Eternity, can recommend a Law ; all These, ’tis
 own’d do, in an eminent Degree, belong to the Law of Nature.
 A Law, which does not depend on the uncertain Meaning
 of Words and Phrases in dead Languages, much less on
 Types, Metaphors, Allegories, Parables, or on the Skill or
 Honesty of weak or designing Transcribers (not to mention
 Translators) for many Ages together ; but on the immu-
 table Relation of Things always visible to the whole World :

Scot’s Christ.
 Life. Part 2.
 Vol. 1. Ch. 1.
 p. 66.

And therefore Dr. Scot justly says, “ Moral Obligations are
 “ not founded like positive Ones upon mutable Circumstan-
 “ ces (which suppose they can only oblige in certain Cir-
 “ cumstances) but upon firm and everlasting Reasons ; up-
 “ on Reasons that to all Eternity will carry with them the
 “ same Force and Necessity as long as we are Creatures of
 “ an infinitely perfect Creator, it will be as much our Duty
 “ as ’tis now, to submit our Will and Affections to our
 “ Reason ; and as long as we are related to other reasonable
 “ Creatures, it will be as much our Duty as now to be kind,
 “ just, and peaceable in all our Intercourses with them : So
 “ that

“ that These are such Duties as no Will can dispense with,
 “ no Reason abrogate, no Circumstances disannul; but as
 “ long as God is what he is, and we are what we are, they
 “ must, and will oblige us.

I could, from many other Considerations, shew you the absolute Perfection of Natural Religion; for Instance, must we not, except we speak without any Meaning, or have no true Meaning of the Word *God*, intend by it a Being of all Perfections, free from all those Defects, which belong even to the most perfect Creatures? And must we not have an Idea of these Perfections, before we can know whether there is any Being who has enjoy'd them from Eternity; and must we not know there is such a Being from our Reason, before we can come to this Question, *Whether he has made any External Revelation?* Nay, Examining into this Question wou'd be to very little Purpose, except we cou'd know whether this Being is bound by his external Word, and had not either at the Time of giving it a secret Will inconsistent with his reveal'd Will? Or has not since chang'd his Will? This can't be known from any external Revelation, tho' it express'd itself ever so plainly; because the Question being, *Whether God is oblig'd to do, as he in it says he will do;* This must be resolv'd antecedently by the Light of Nature, which must discover to us the Veracity of God, and the Immutability of his Will; and the same Reasons which will prove he cou'd not change his Will since he made an external Revelation, will prove his Will was always unchangeable, and at all Times the same; whether internally, or externally reveal'd: Nor cou'd we take a Step towards proving the Veracity of God, or the Immutability of his Will; or indeed, any of his Perfections besides Power, without knowing that the Will of God is always determin'd by the Nature and Reason

of Things ; Otherwise Falshood and Mutability might be the Will of God, and there cou'd be no such Thing in Nature as Good and Evil, but an arbitrary Will wou'd govern all Things.

Were we not capable by our Reason of distinguishing Good from Evil, or knowing from the Consideration of the invariable Perfections of God, what the divine Goodness cou'd command, or forbid his Creatures antecedently to any external Revelation, we cou'd not distinguish the true instituted Religion from the many false Ones : Or if by Accident we stumbl'd on it, avoid running into many Absurdities in the Interpretation of it, thro' the Difficulties that must attend a Book writ in a dead Language, and so many Ages since ; and where thro' the vast Variety of Readings we might mistake the true Reading ; and tho' we were

2 Cor. 3. 6. certain of the Letter, even *the Letter killeth*.

If Man had not natural Abilities to distinguish between Good and Evil, or to know what is pleasing, or displeasing to God ; how cou'd we say he was a moral Agent, or even an accountable Creature ?

DID we not allow that Men, by the Light of Nature, are capable of forming a sound Judgment in Matters of Religion, they may be so impos'd on by controverted, or misinterpreted, not to say forg'd Texts, as to admit several Objects of divine Worship in their Practice, while in their Words they own but One ; or, in Order to advance a supernatural Charity, destroy all natural Humanity ; and believe our Love to God may be best shewn by our Hatred to our Fellow-Creatures ; and introduce such abominable Notions, as may make Religion, instead of a Benefit, become a Mischief to Mankind.

WHEREAS

WHEREAS, if we allow the Light of Nature sufficient to enable us to judge rightly in these Matters, and consequently to distinguish Truth from Falshood, we must own, since there can be no Disagreement in Truth, that there's an exact Conformity between internal and external Revelation, with no other Difference but as to the Manner of their being reveal'd : Or in other Words, that the Gospel, since 'tis impossible for Men at the same Time to be under different Obligations, can't command those Things which the Law of Nature forbids, or forbid what That commands ; nor can any Thing be a Part of Religion by one Law, which by the other is Superstition ; nor can External Revelation make That the Will of God, which the Light of Nature continually represents as unworthy of having God for its Author.

THE judicious Writer of the *Rational Catechism* lately reprinted says, “ That one of the most universal Causes of Pref. to Catechism,
 “ the great Differences among Men in Matters of Religion,
 “ is, that they have not examin'd Things to the Bottom ;
 “ they have fail'd in their Foundation-Work ; they have
 “ too much slighted that Philosophy which is the Natural
 “ Religion of all Men ; and which being natural, must needs
 “ be Universal and Eternal : — They have forsaken the
 “ Rule of right Reason, which is only capable to produce
 “ true Symmetry in their intellectual Buildings ; and they
 “ have apply'd themselves without any Rule to the Interpretation of Words and Phrases, which being easily susceptible of various Sences, have produc'd as many deform'd Irregularities.

Tho' all Parties alike pretend to aim at Truth, yet none of them, I think, inform us what Truth is, or wherein it consists : Now if Truth in general, implies an Agreement

of our Ideas with the Things themselves, Religious Truth, or True Religion must consist in the Agreement of our Ideas with those Things which are the Subjects of our religious Inquiry; *viz.* The Nature of God and Man; and false Religion must consist in having Ideas that are not agreeable to, or do not truly represent those Subjects; and this Agreement we call Truth in respect to *Theory*, is what we term, in relation to *Action*, fit, just, good, or reasonable. Thus God is frequently styl'd in Scripture the *God of Truth*, because his Ideas of Things, and the Things themselves exactly correspond; and all his Actions are agreeable to the Relation Things have to one another: And when our Actions are such, we do all that's fit, just, and reasonable, all that God or Man can require; and from hence too it follows, that Iniquity is the same in Action, as Falsity is in Theory.





C H A P. VII.

That Natural and Reveal'd Religion having the same End, their Precepts must be the same.

B.  **ALLOWING** that the Natural Knowledge we have of God, ourselves, and our Fellow Creatures, is the Foundation of all Religion, may not external Revelation, building on this Foundation, erect a larger and nobler Edifice, by extending it to such Things as the Light of Nature cou'd not reach, without contradicting any Thing it teaches ?

A. I thought I had obviated this Objection, by proving that the Religion of Nature was so perfect, that nothing cou'd be added to it; and that the Truth of all Revelation was to be judg'd of by its Agreement with it: However, since this Objection is the most plausible of any you have yet made; I reply, That if our Natural Notions of the divine Perfections demonstrate, that God will require nothing of his Creatures but what tends to their Good; whatsoever is of this Kind, is a Superstructure that belongs to the Law of Nature: Or, in other Words, what the Reason, or Nature of the Things themselves plainly point out to us; and for all other Matters, which have no such Tendency,
you

you must seek another Foundation, another Nature very different from the divine, to build *Your Hay and Stubble upon*. And,

If it be evident from the Light of Nature, what are those Relations we stand in to God and our Fellow-Creatures ; and that neither God nor Man, without acting tyrannically, can require more than Those require ; can external Revelation any more than internal exceed these Bounds ?

If original Revelation comprehends every Thing obligatory on the Account of its Excellency ; that is, every Thing which tends to the Honour of God, or the Good of Man ; and These are the only Ends of *Traditional* Religion ; no arbitrary, or merely positive Precepts, as not tending to the Honour of God, or the Good of Man, can belong either to Natural, or Reveal'd Religion.

By the Law of Nature as well as the Gospel, the Honour of God, and the Good of Man, being the two Grand, or General Commandments ; all particular Precepts must be comprehended under these Two, and belong alike to the Law of Nature as well as the Gospel ; and what does not, can belong to neither. Thus any particular Precept, if by Change of Circumstances it ceases to contribute to the Honour of God, or the Good of Man, much more if it become prejudicial to either, must lose its obliging Force.

THERE must be some Rule, or Rules, which bind without Exception, *because every Exception to a Rule is built on some Rule or other* ; and as there can't be Rules, so there can't be Exceptions *ad infinitum* ; and I suppose, you will not deny, but that these two Grand Rules, or Commandments, *the Honour of God, and the Good of Man*, are obligatory without Exception. And yet These would be to little Purpose, cou'd not Reason tell Men how to apply them in all Conditions, and Circumstances of Life. B. SUP-

B. SUPPOSING no particular Precepts can oblige, if they chance to clash with either of those Commandments, yet what is to be done if these Two interfere with one another ; must the Good of Man, or the Honour of God take Place ?

A. THESE two Grand Laws are in Effect the same, since what promotes the Honour of God necessarily promotes the Good of Man : The more we love and honour God, the more we shall imitate him in our extensive Love to our Fellow-Creatures ; who are equally the Children of God. The greater our Veneration is for our Maker, the more it will excite us to copy those Perfections of Goodness and Benevolence we adore in him ; so that the Duty of a truly-religious Person, and of a good Subject and Citizen are the same with relation to God and Man ; for the more he honours God, the more zealous will he be to act the Patriot ; and the more he does That, the more he honours God ; because the happier Men are, the more Reason they have to honour That God, who made 'em so. The Way to glorify your Father which is in Heaven, is to let your Light so shine before Men, ^{Mat. 5. 16.} that they may see your good Works. And herein is my Father ^{John 15. 8.} glorify'd, that ye bear much Fruit. And indeed, nothing can be plainer from Scripture, than that these two great Duties of the Love of God, and our Neighbour, include each other. If, says the Apostle, a Man say I love God, and hateth his ^{1 John 4. 20.} Brother, he is a Liar. And, If we love one another, God ^{1b. Ver. 12.} dwelleth in us ; and the Love of God is perfected in us. Again, Let us love one another ; every one that loveth is born ^{1b. Ver. 7. 8.} of God, and knoweth God. He that loves not, knoweth not God. But who so hath this World's Goods, and seeth his Bro- ^{1 John 3. 17.} ther have need, and shutteth up his Bowels of Compassion from him ; how dwelleth the Love of God in him ? And it was this Consideration, that made that great Emperor and Philosopher

Lib. 3. c. 12. philosopher *Marcus Antoninus* say, "Thou wilt never do any
in Mr. & Ma-
dam *Dacier's* "Thing purely humane in a right Manner, unless Thou
Version.

"knowest the Relation it bears to Things divine; nor any
"Thing divine, unless Thou knowest all the Ties it has
"to Things humane.

IN a Word, As Man is by Nature qualify'd to answer all the Purposes of a social Life, and to act a Part agreeable to Reason, so in doing This he gives Glory to his Maker, by fulfilling the End of his Creation; but if he goes contrary to the Light of Nature in acting an unsociable and hurtful Part, he reflects Dishonour on his Creator by defeating, as far as in him lies, the Design of God in making him a social Creature. But,

BECAUSE Bigots represent these two Grand Obligations as frequently clashing; and oppose Things which are for the Good of Man, on Pretence that the Honour of God will either directly, or indirectly suffer by it; and on this Pretence have frequently done such Mischiefs to their Fellow-Creatures, as to give Occasion for that Proverbial Saying, *In Nomine Domini incipit omne malum*: Give me Leave to say, That we can no otherwise honour God, since that consists in having the most exalted Ideas of him, than by supposing him benevolent in the most universal and impartial Manner; and consequently, to imagine he can command any Thing inconsistent with this universal Benevolence, is highly to dishonour him; 'tis to destroy his impartial Goodness, and make his Power and Wisdom degenerate into Cruelty and Craft.

THO' we have receiv'd our All from God, we can give him nothing, nor do him the least Kindness, much less return Kindness for Kindness; and therefore, the only Way we have to shew our real Gratitude to our great Creator and

and Benefactor, is to be as useful as we can to his Creatures, whom we ought to love as ourselves; and if there can now be a Sin against the Holy Ghost, I shou'd not scruple to say, It is making Religion the Means of destroying the End of all Religion, and rendring the Creature miserable on Pretence of doing Honour to the Creator; who, as he has impress'd on *Bodies*, in Order to preserve the Natural World, a Tendency to each other; so he has implanted in *Minds*, the better to support the Moral World, a Tendency to be kind, and beneficent to one another. And so deep is the Impression of Benevolence, that we can't but applaud a Person who does brave and generous Actions, even tho' we suffer by them; and as much condemn him who acts basely and treacherously, tho' we are ever so great Gainers.

“ Is there then (*says a Noble Author*) a natural Beauty Characterist.
 “ of Figures; and is there not as natural One of Actions? Vol. 2. p. 414.
 “ No sooner the Eye opens upon *Figures*, the Ear to *Sounds*
 “ than straight the *Beautiful* results, and *Grace* and *Harmony*
 “ *ny* are known, and acknowledg'd. No sooner are Actions
 “ view'd, no sooner the *human Affections* and *Passions* discern'd (and they are most of them as soon discern'd as
 “ felt) than straight an *inward Eye* distinguishes, and sees
 “ the *fair* and *shapely*, the *Amiable* and *Admirable* apart
 “ from the *Deform'd*, the *Foul*, the *Odious*, or the *Despicable*.
 How is it possible therefore not to own, “ That as the *Dis-*
 “ *tinctions* have their Foundation in *Nature*, the Discern-
 “ ment itself is *natural*, and from *Nature alone*.

B. THIS, I own, is a beautiful Description of human Nature, and a strong Evidence of the Goodness of its Author; but do Men act as if they had such an innate Love for Virtue, or such a benevolent Disposition?

L

A. AN

A. AN execrable Superstition has in many Christian Countries, in a Manner, extinguish'd these kind Sentiments, and even all Humanity and Pity; insomuch that the tender Sex can rejoice to hear the Shrieks, and see the Agonies of Men expiring under the most cruel Tortures; and there's scarce any Place, so much does this curst Bigotry prevail, where we do not almost daily see too much Reason to cry,

Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum.

Characterist.
Vol. 2. p. 48.

THE Noble Author now quoted justly observes, " If there be a Religion that teaches the Adoration and Love of a God, whose Character it is to be captious, and of high Resentment, subject to Wrath and Anger, furious, revengeful, and revenging himself, when offended, on others than those who gave the Offence; and if there be added to the Character of this God, a fraudulent Disposition, encouraging Deceit and Treachery among Men; favourable to a few, tho' for slight Causes, and cruel to the rest; 'tis evident that such a Religion as this being strongly enforc'd, must of Necessity raise even an Approbation and Respect towards the Vices of this Kind, and breed a suitable Disposition, a capricious, partial, revengeful, and deceitful Temper. For even *Irregularities* and *Enormities* of a heinous Kind must in many Cases appear illustrious to one, who considers them in a Being admir'd and contemplated with the highest Honour and Veneration. — Whensoever, therefore, a Religion teaches the Love and Admiration of a Deity, that has any apparent Character of *Ill*; it teaches at the same Time a Love and Admiration of *that Ill*, and causes that to be taken for good and amiable, which is itself horrid and detestable.

Ib. p. 47.

ARCH-

ARCHBISHOP *Tillotson*, than whom none better understood human Nature, says, that “ According as Mens No-^{serm. Vol. 1.}
 “ tions of God are, such will their Religion be ; if they ^{p. 181. &}
 “ have gross and false Conceptions of God, their Reli-^{Co. 1. p. 60.}
 “ gion will be absurd and superstitious : If Men fancy God
 “ to be an ill-natur’d Being, arm’d with infinite Power,
 “ who takes Delight in the Misery and Ruin of his Crea-
 “ tures, and is ready to take all Advantages against them,
 “ they may fear him, but they will hate him ; and they
 “ will be apt to be such towards one another, as they
 “ fancy God to be towards them ; for all Religion doth
 “ naturally incline Men to imitate him whom they wor-
 “ ship.

DR. *Scot*, to root out all such injurious Notions as de-
 rogate from the Goodness of God, very justly observes,
 that “ God being infinitely good in his own Nature, it ^{Christ. Life,}
 “ is impossible we shou’d conceive him to be better than ^{p. 2. Vol. 1.}
 “ he is ; and therefore every false Notion we entertain of
 “ his Goodness must detract from it ; and so much as we
 “ detract from his Goodness, so much we detract from
 “ the principal Reason and Motive of our loving him.

AND indeed, Power and Knowledge of themselves can’t
 engage our Love ; if they cou’d, we shou’d love the Devil
 in Proportion to his Power and Knowledge ; ’tis Goodness
 alone which can beget Confidence, Love, and Veneration ;
 and there’s none of those Questions, whether relating to
 God or Man, but what may be easily determined, by con-
 sidering which Side of the Question carries with it the
 greatest Goodness ; since the same Light of Nature, which
 shews us there is such a good Being, shews us also what
 such Goodness expects. And did Men consider how re-
 pugnant ’tis to his Goodness, to require any Thing of

them which they had no Reason to obey, but because they had no Power to disobey; they must abhor the Notion of all arbitrary Commands.

See *Plutarch*
de Superstitio-
ne, Op. To. 2.
p. 171. E.
Edit. Franco-
furt.

AND therefore, I shall not scruple to affirm, That He who stedfastly adheres to what the Light of Nature teaches him concerning the divine Goodness, as he will avoid the comfortless Prospect of the Atheist, the perpetual Anxiety of the superstitious, the wild Perturbation of the Enthusiast, and the pernicious Fury of the Bigot; so he can't fail of the True Religion, happily seated in the Middle between these Extrems. And, as such a Person can't but love God as he ought, so in Imitation of the divine Goodness, which influences all his Actions, he will contribute his utmost to the Good of Others; and his Love and Kindness will be as extensive as human Nature; and going on rational and evident Principles, which must give him entire Satisfaction, he will act a steady uniform Part. And what can be wanting to a Man, who has this heavenly, this god-like Disposition, which renders him happy in himself; and as far as it is in his Power, makes the whole World so too.

AND since 'tis not easy to part with a Subject, which One can scarce think of without Rapture; I must say, that Men can never have true Sentiments of the Goodness of the divine Legislator, or esteem his Laws as they ought, till they are convinc'd he requires nothing of them but what is for their Good; and that they can't but be miserable as long as they swerve from Rules so essential to their Happiness; and that the longer they do so, the more difficult will it be to acquire a contrary Habit. These Notions early inculcated, will cause Men with Joy to obey the divine Laws, and make them in Reality love God as well as be belov'd by him; who has the chief Regard to the Heart, and above all Things

Things requires the Purity of the Mind; and that Men shou'd act, not out of a Principle of slavish Fear, but from *perfect Love void of all Fear.*

Plutarch speaking of Religion, as it stood in the Heathen Church, and in his own Time, represents it as full of Satisfaction, Hope, Joy, and Delight; and *says*, " It is plain, ^{Treatise against Epicurean} and evident from most demonstrable Testimonies, that ^{Atheism. To. 2. p. 101. D.} neither the Societies, nor publick Meetings in the Temples, nor any other diverting Parties, Sights, or Entertainments are more delightful, or rejoicing, than what we ourselves behold, and practice in the Church-Worship. — Our Disposition and Temper is not on this Occasion, as if we were in the Presence of worldly Potentates, dread Sovereigns and despotick Princes; nor are we here found meanly humbling ourselves, crouching in Fear and Awe, and full of Anxiety and Confusion, as wou'd be natural to us in such a Case? but where the Divinity is esteem'd the *nearest*, and most immediately present, there Horrors and Amazement are the furthest banish'd; there the Heart, we find, gives the freest Way to Pleasure, to Entertainment — and this even to Excess. " And,

CHRISTIANS in addressing to the divine Majesty, must be fill'd with inexpressible Joy and Delight, did they consider the true Notion of God; " Who, as *Archbishop Tillotson* ^{To. 1. p. 248} *says*, wou'd appear to be so lovely a Being, so full of Goodness and all desirable Perfections, that even those who are of so irregular Understanding, as not to believe there is a God, yet could not refrain from wishing with all their Hearts there was One — Who takes particular Care of every one of us, and loves us, and delights to do us good. — Who understands all our Wants, and is able and willing to relieve us in our greatest Streights. — Is it

" not

“ not every Man’s Interest, that there should be such a Governor of the World as really designs our Happiness, and
 “ has omitted nothing necessary to it; as governs us for our
 “ Advantage, and will require nothing of us but what is for
 “ our Good; and yet will infinitely reward us for doing of
 “ That which is best for ourselves; that will punish any
 “ Man that shall go about to injure us, or to deal otherwise
 “ with us than himself in like Cases would be dealt withal.
 “ — We have Reason to believe God to be such a Being,
 “ if he be at all.

B. ARE not the last Words too bold in supposing there could be no God, were he not such as he describes him?

A. WITH Submission, I think not, since there can be nothing in God but what is God-like; he either must be perfectly good, or not be at all. It wou’d be well, if all who in Words give this Character of the Deity, were consistent with themselves, and did not impute such Actions to him, as make him resemble the worst of Beings, and so run into downright *Demonism*. And let me add, Men of good Sense, and who mean well, will naturally fall into the same Sentiments; a *Shaftsbury* will say the same as a *Tillotson*.

Letter concerning Enthusiasm. p. 40, 41. “ If there be, says that Noble Author, a general Mind;
 “ it can have no particular Interest: But the general Good,
 “ and the Good of the Whole, and its own private Good,
 “ must of Necessity be one and the same. It can intend
 “ nothing besides, nor aim at any Thing beyond, nor be
 “ provok’d to any Thing contrary. So that we have only
 “ to consider, whether there be really such a Thing as a
 “ Mind that has Relation to the Whole, or not. For, if unhappily there be no Mind, we may comfort ourselves,
 “ however, that Nature has no Malice: If there be really a
 “ MIND we may rest satisfy’d, that it is the best natur’d one
 “ in

“ *in the World.* The last Case, one wou’d imagine, shou’d
 “ be the most comfortable; and the Notion of a *common*
 “ *Parent* less frightful than that of *forlorn Nature*, and
 “ a *fatherless World.* Tho’ as Religion stands amongst us,
 “ there are many good People who wou’d have less Fear in
 “ being thus expos’d; and wou’d be easier, perhaps, in their
 “ Minds, if they were assur’d they had only mere *Chance* to
 “ trust to. For no Body trembles to think there shou’d be
 “ *no God*; but rather, that there *shou’d be one.* This how-
 “ ever wou’d be otherwise, if *Deity* were thought as kindly
 “ of as *Humanity*; and we cou’d be perswaded to believe,
 “ that if there really was a *God*, *the biggest Goodness* must
 “ of *Necessity* belong to him, without any of those Defects
 “ of *Passion*, those *Meannesses* and *Imperfections*, which we
 “ acknowledge such in ourselves; which, as good Men, we
 “ endeavour all we can to be superior to, and which, we
 “ find, we every Day conquer as we grow better.

IN Recapitulating what I have said of the Agreement of
 Natural and Reveal’d Religion, I can’t do it more fully than
 in the Words of Dr. *Sherlock* (now Bishop of *Bangor*) who,
 in a Sermon for Propagating the Gospel (where we may ex-
 pect every Thing which recommends it) says, that “ The
 “ Religion of the Gospel is the *true Original Religion* of Serm. before
the Society for
Propag. the
Gospel. p. 16;
&c.
 “ *Reason* and *Nature.* — That the Doctrine of Repen-
 “ tance, with which the Gospel set out in the World, had
 “ Reference to the *Law of Reason* and *Nature*, against which
 “ Men had every where offended; and since Repentance in-
 “ fers the Necessity of a future Reformation, and a *Return*
 “ to that Duty and Obedience, *from which*, by Transgres-
 “ sion we are fallen; the Consequence is manifestly This,
 “ that the *Gospel* was a *Republication of the Law of Nature*,
 “ and its *Precepts declarative* of that *Original Religion*, which
 “ was as *old as the Creation.* “ THIS.

" THIS, *continues he*, will appear, by considering the Na-
 " ture of the Thing itself. The *Notions* of Good and Evil
 " are eternally and unalterably the *same*; which *Notions* are
 " the Rules and Measures of all moral Actions, and are con-
 " sequently necessary, and constituent Parts of Religion :
 " And therefore, if the *Religion of Nature* in her primitive
 " State was *pure* and *uncorrupt*, which will not, I presume,
 " be deny'd, tho' there was sufficient Reason for a *Republi-*
 " *cation* of it, because of the great Ignorance and Supersti-
 " tion which had grown upon the World ; yet there cou'd
 " be no Reason for any *Alteration* of it : For tho' the World
 " was the worse for abusing the *Religion of Nature*, and
 " might want to be reform'd by a divine Instructor ; yet the
 " *Religion of Nature* was not the worse for being abus'd,
 " but *still* retain'd its first *Purity* and *Simplicity*. The Du-
 " ties of Religion, consider'd as the Rules of Action, flow
 " from the Relation we bear to God, and to one another ;
 " and Religion must ever be the same, as long as these Rela-
 " tions continue unalter'd : If our first Parent was the Crea-
 " ture of God, so are we ; and whatever Service and Duty he
 " ow'd in Virtue of this Dependence, the *same* is due from
 " us ; nor can this *Relation* be ever made the Ground of *dis-*
 " *ferent* Duties in his Case, and ours : If therefore, *Nature*
 " rightly instructed him at first how to *serve* his Maker,
 " our Obligations being the same with his, our Rule must
 " be the *same* also. The Case is the same with respect to
 " the Duties owing from Man to Man ; and it would be
 " as reasonable to suppose, that the three Angles of a Tri-
 " angle should be equal to two right Ones in one Age, and
 " unequal in another, as to suppose, that the Duties of Re-
 " ligion should differ in one Age from what they were in
 " another ; the Habitues and Relations from which they
 " flow continuing always the same. " THAT

“ THAT the Case is in Fact what I have represented it
 “ to be, might be shewn from the *particular* Laws of the
 “ Gospel, and their Dependence on the Maxims and Prin-
 “ ciples of *Natural Religion*. — I will content myself
 “ with one general Proof, which reaches to *every* Part of
 “ the *Christian Doctrine*. — If the Law and the Prophets
 “ hang on these two grand Commandments, *viz.* The *Love*
 “ of God, and the *Love* of our Neighbour ; then the Doc-
 “ trine of our Saviour, which is the Perfection of the Law
 “ and the Prophets, must hang on *them* likewise: Now, if
 “ you will allow, that the Love of God, and the Love of
 “ our Neighbour are *Fundamentals* in the Law of Reason
 “ and Nature (as *undoubtedly* they are) you must also al-
 “ low, that whatever may be deduc’d from them by ratio-
 “ nal Consequence, must be a *Precept* of the Law of Na-
 “ ture: Whatever, therefore, hangs on these two Com-
 “ mandments, must necessarily be a Part of *Natural Reli-*
 “ gion ; and that *all* the Law and the Prophets do so hang,
 “ and consequently, the Doctrine of the Gospel, which is
 “ the Perfection of them ; you have had our Saviour’s *ex-*
 “ *press* Testimony. Since then it appears (as I think)
 “ that the *Religion* of the Gospel is the *True Original* Reli-
 “ gion of *Reason* and *Nature*; — That it has, as such, a
 “ Claim to be receiv’d *independent* of those *Miracles*, which
 “ were wrought for its Confirmation, will be admitted by
 “ all, who allow the Force and Obligation of *Natural Re-*
 “ *ligion* ; and can be deny’d by none who know, or under-
 “ stand themselves. The Principles of Religion are inter-
 “ woven with the very Frame and Make of our Minds, and
 “ we may as well run from ourselves, as from the Sense of
 “ the Obligations we are under.

M

B. BUT

B. BUT does not this Right Reverend Prelate in this Sermon affirm, that there are Doctrines in Christianity, which, tho' not different, yet are distinct from the Principles of Reason and Nature?

A. THERE'S nothing more common with learned Authors, than Distinctions without any Difference; yet the Bishop very cautiously words what he says, "That the Doctrines of Christianity, tho' not different, are distinct from the Principles of Reason and Nature;" but he does not say they are distinct from those Doctrines, which flow from the Principles of Reason and Nature: And what he immediately adds, that "Our Saviour came in to the World to supply the Defects, not of Religion, which continu'd in its Purity and Perfection, but of Nature;" plainly shews, that he thinks nothing cou'd be added by our Saviour, to a Law that had no Defects; and that the Defects of Nature cou'd only be supply'd, by obliging People to live up to this Natural Law of unchangeable Purity and Perfection.

THIS is doing Justice to Reveal'd as well as Natural Religion, and shews the Author of both to be at all Times equally Wise, Good, and Beneficent; and the Bishop ought to be valu'd, for speaking thus plainly: *O si sic omnia dixisset.*

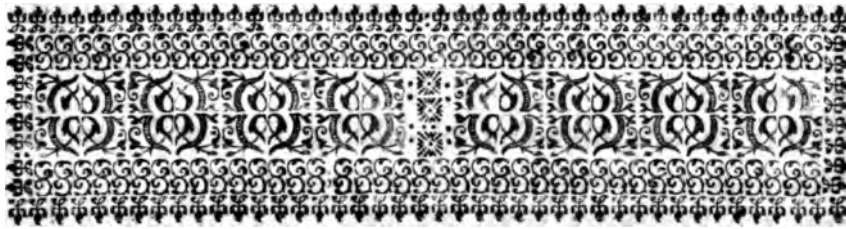
AND to this Right Reverend Father, I may add the Authority of the late Most Reverend Archbishop *Sharp*,
 Serm. Vol. 4. who says, "That Religion (taking that Word as it fig-
 p. 208—211. nifies that universal Duty we owe to God, and by which
 "we are to recommend ourselves to his Favour) is not so
 "variable, uncertain, and arbitrary a Matter, as some Men
 "do perhaps suppose it; but is a constant, fixed, perma-
 "nent, immutable Thing. The same now that it was in
 "the

“ the Days of the Old Law ; and the same then that it
 “ was in the Days before the Law was given ; and the
 “ same both then and now that it shall be a thousand
 “ Years hence, if the World should last so long. True
 “ Religion, and that which is from God, was, and is,
 “ and ever will be the same in Substance in all Coun-
 “ tries, and in all Nations, and among all Sorts and Con-
 “ ditions of Men whatsoever ; and the Sum of it is, *To*
 “ *love the Lord our God with all our Hearts, and with*
 “ *all our Minds, and with all our Strength ; and next to*
 “ *that, To love our Neighbour as ourselves.* This was the
 “ Religion that the Patriarchs, and all the pious Men of
 “ Old lived in, and by which they obtained God’s Favour
 “ and Acceptance ; when as yet there was no reveal’d insti-
 “ tuted Religion in the World. — That this is the Sum
 “ of the Christian Religion, no Man can in the least doubt
 “ that has ever read the New Testament. — In our Sa-
 “ viour’s Institution there is hardly any one Thing recom-
 “ mended to us, that doth not directly relate to this Mat-
 “ ter ; that is not either an Instance wherein we are to ex-
 “ press our Love to God, and our Neighbour ; or a Means
 “ whereby we may be furthered in the practising of those Du-
 “ ties ; or an Argument, and Motive, and Encouragement to
 “ excite us to the practising of them. It is the Design of all
 “ his Doctrines to give us right Notions of God, and our
 “ Neighbour ; to teach us how excellent, how good God is
 “ in himself, and how kind, how gracious to us ; and there-
 “ fore, what infinite Reason we have to love, and serve him ;
 “ and to love and serve all Mankind (who are our Neigh-
 “ bours.) for his sake. —

“ We have an easy, and a true Notion of that Religion
 “ which is from God, and we can never be at a Loss to find

“ out in what it doth consist ; it is not a Thing to be al-
“ ter’d at Pleasure ; both the Law of Nature, and the Law
“ of God ; both the natural Dispensation under which all
“ Men are born, and the reveal’d Dispensation as we have
“ either in the Old or New Testament ; do sufficiently instruct
“ us in the main Heads of it. Nay, I dare be bold to say, so
“ long as Mankind do retain their Nature, and are not trans-
“ form’d into another Sort of Creatures than what God made
“ them at first ; it is impossible that there should be any true
“ Religion, but what may be summed up in these two
“ Things ; To love God, and our Neighbour.





C H A P. VIII.

That the not adhering to those Notions Reason dictates concerning the Nature of God, has been the Occasion of all Superstition, and all those innumerable Mischiefs, that Mankind, on the Account of Religion, have done either to themselves, or one another.



HAVING in general shewn the Absurdity of not being govern'd by the Reason of Things in all Matters of Religion, I shall now in particular, shew the fatal Consequences of not adhering to those Notions Reason dictates concerning the Nature of God.

Charron, tho' a Priest of that Church which abounds with Superstition, the most pernicious as well as absurd, seems to have a right Notion of Superstition as well as justly to abhor it, in saying, that " Superstition, and most other Errors and Defects in Religion, are, generally speaking, owing chiefly to Want of becoming, and right Apprehensions of God; We debase, and bring him down to us; We compare, and judge him by ourselves; We cloath him
" with

*Charron of
Wisdom. Eng.
Transl. P.
131.*

“ with our Infirmities, and then proportion, and fit our Fancy accordingly. — What horrid Prophanation and Blaphemy is this !

’Tis to this Absurdity of debasing God, and cloathing him with our Infirmities, and judging of him by ourselves, that the Mediatory Gods amongst the Heathen owe their Rise. Had they believ’d a supreme Being was every where, and at all Times knew their Thoughts, they cou’d never have taken such a round-about Way of addressing him ; who not only knew what they desir’d, but their real Wants, and what would relieve them better than any Mediatory Beings whatever.

B. THEY address’d to Mediatory Beings, to shew their greater Respect to the supreme Being ; and their own Unworthiness to approach him.

A. THIS shews what unworthy Notions they had of the supreme Being ; since it wou’d be an Affront even to a Temporal Prince, if he was present, and heard every Thing you said, not to address to him, but to another, to let the Prince know what you wanted from him.

THE Heathen must think, if they thought at all, that those Mediatory Gods cou’d either suggest, to the supreme God some Reasons he before was ignorant of ; or that by their Importunities they cou’d prevail on his Weakness, to do what otherwise he was not willing to do.

THIS Heathen Notion, as it suppos’d the supreme God either ignorant or weak ; so it made the Mediatory Gods to have a greater Kindness for, and Readiness to do Good to Mankind ; and that their Sollicitations made him better-natur’d than otherwise he wou’d be : This of Course took off their Love from the Supreme, and plac’d it on those mediatory Gods, upon whose powerful Intercessions they so much

much depended. However, these Heathens, allowing One, and but One Most High God, did not so far derogate from the Honour of the One True God, as to pretend that the most distinguished among their several Mediators was equal to him; *Equality* and *Mediation* being as inconsistent as *Equality* and *Supremacy*. And they wou'd have made their Religion an errant Jumble, if they had worshipp'd these Gods sometimes as Mediators only; sometimes as sovereign Disposers of Things; and sometimes as both together.

HAD the Heathen believ'd God to have been a purely-spiritual, invisible Being; they cou'd never have suppos'd him visible to Mortals; or have thought that an unlimited Being cou'd appear under the limited Form of a Man, or other Animal; or that an Omnipresent Being cou'd any more be present in one Place, or Creature, than another; or that such a Being cou'd be confin'd to a small Spot of Earth, while another equally omnipresent was in Heaven, and a Third descending from thence, &c. Or that one God cou'd be sent on the Errand of another God, after the Manner that God *Mercury* was by God *Jupiter*; tho' there was nothing too absurd for the Heathen to believe, after they had destroy'd the Unity of God; except it was, that *Jupiter* and *Mercury*, the *Sender* and the *Sent* were the same God.

The primitive Fathers bitterly inveigh'd against these heathenish Notions: *Justin Martyr* for Instance says, *Justin Oper.*
 "None, who have the least Sense, will dare to affirm, that *p. 207. Ed.*
 "the Maker and Father of the Universe did appear in a ^{1593.}
 "small Spot of Earth; the God of the Universe can nei- *Al. p. 283. B.*
 "ther ascend, nor descend, or come into any Place. *Ter-* *P. 356. E.*
tullian says; "He wou'd not believe the sovereign God ^{*Adv. Prax.*}
 "cended into the Womb of a Woman; tho' even the Scrip- *cap. 16.*
 "ture itself should say it. 'Tis impossible; says *Eusebius*,
 "that

Demon. Evan. l. 5 c. 20, p. 248. “ that the Eyes of Mortals should ever see the supreme God ; viz. Him, who is above all Things, and whose

Eccl. Hist. l. 1, c. 2, p. 6, C. “ Effence is unbegotten and immutable. Again, “ ’Tis absurd, and contrary to all Reason, that the unbegotten and immutable Nature of the Almighty God should take the Form of a Man ; or that the Scripture should forge such like Falsities.” *Minutius Felix* in his Apology says, that

Reeve’s Transl. p. 121. Ed. Dav. c. 23. “ The Deity can’t dye, nor can any Thing which is born be a God : That only is divine, which has neither Beginning nor End ; If the Gods get Children, they would get them immortal : We must conclude those Gods to be Men, of whose Birth and Burial we are fully satisfy’d.” Thus the Fathers expos’d the Pagan *Polytheism*.

A great deal more, as you may well imagine, might be said on this Head ; but now I shall briefly consider what pernicious Effects the having wrong and unnatural Conceptions of the Deity, has occasion’d among Men with relation to themselves, and one another.

If we take a general View of those Mischiefs Mankind have at all Times practis’d on a religious Account, either upon themselves or others ; we shall find them owing to their entertaining such Notions of God, as are intirely inconsistent with his Nature ; and contrary to what their Reason, if attended to, wou’d inform them of the Design and End of the Laws of God.

HAD not Numbers in all Ages thought, that God delighted in the Pain and Misery of his Creatures ; they cou’d never have imagin’d, that the best Way to render them acceptable to him, was by tormenting themselves with immoderate Watchings, Fastings, Penances, and Mortifications of all Sorts ; and the greater the more pleasing : And even at present there are among *Christians, Mahometans, and Pagans,*

gans, Numbers of Men who devote themselves to Exercises full of Pain and corporal Sufferings, and either wound, or mangle their own Persons, or find other Ways of tormenting themselves; and indeed, the Superstitious every where think, the less Mercy they shew to their Bodies, the more Mercy God will shew to their Souls.

MANY of the primitive Christians, instead of flying, as the Gospel directs, not only ran voluntarily to Execution, but provok'd their Judges to do them that Favour. And under *Trajan*, all the Christians in a City in *Asia* came in a Body to the Proconsul, and offer'd themselves to the Slaughter; which made him cry, *O! ye unhappy People, if ye have a Mind to dye, have ye not Halters and Precipices enough to end*^{Tert. ad Scap. c. 5. p. 11.}
your Lives; but ye must come here for Executioners. And this was a general Practice under the *Antonini*; and *Marcus Antoninus* severely reflects on the Obstinacy of the Christians, in thus running headlong to Death. And *St. Cyprian*^{See Marc. Antonin. de rebus suis, l. 11. c. 3. And Lucian de morte Peregrin. To. 2. p. 567. 568. And Arrian. Epiq. l. 4. c. 7. p. 500. Edit. Cantab. Le Clerk's Life of Cyp. Bib. Un. To. 12. p. 248, 249. Ep 14. p. 31. Edit. Oxon.} labours to comfort those who might be so unhappy, by the ceasing of the then Persecution, to miss the Crown of Martyrdom; tho' one wou'd think there were but few who wanted this Consolation; since he says, *Many of the Clergy, and the far greater Part of the Laity apostatiz'd.* But when by the Empire's becoming Christian, the Crown of Martyrdom was no longer to be obtain'd by the prevailing Party of Christians, then exercising Cruelties on themselves was esteem'd the next best Thing; and many Devotees put monstrous Hardships on themselves, while others chose Poverty, Rags, and Nastiness; or else retir'd to Caves, Deserts, and other solitary Places to sigh away their miserable Lives: And Ecclesiastick History is full of Miracles done by such Madmen as *Simeon Stylites*, who had no other Dwelling than a Pillar, on which he spent the best Part of his Life; and

'twas owing to these superstitious Notions, that such Numbers of *Monasteries* and *Nunneries* were soon founded to the great Oppression and Depopulation of the Christian World; not but that the impudent Forgeries of *Athanasius*, and other such like Saints about Miracles done by *Monks*, help'd to increase this Superstition; whilst the Prelates, tho' they encourag'd those Severites on others, were far from practising any on themselves.

See *Athanasius's* Life of *Anthony* the Monk, To. 2. p. 455, A & d. *Jerom* of the Miracles of *Paul & Hilari*on two Monks, To. 1, p. 237, & d. & p. 241; & d.

HAD such Notions been adher'd to concerning the divine Goodness, as the Light of Nature dictates, the *Egyptians*, and some other Pagan Nations cou'd never have thought that *Cutting off the Foreskin* (not to be perform'd without great Pain and Hazard) cou'd have been esteem'd a religious Duty acceptable to a good and gracious God; who makes nothing in vain, much less what requires the cutting off, even with extream Danger as well as Anguish. Had Nature requir'd such an Operation, Nature, being always the same, wou'd still have requir'd it.

THIS Institution, as is prov'd by *Marsham*, and Others, seems to be owing to the *Egyptians*, who thought all to be profane who us'd it not; and it was after *Abraham* had been in *Egypt*, that *Circumcision* was instituted; in Order, 'tis likely, to recommend his Posterity to the *Egyptians*, on whom they were for some Ages to depend; and what makes this the more probable, is, that 'twas not till after the Lord had order'd *Moses* into *Egypt*, that *the Lord met him by the Way in the Inn, and sought to kill him* for not circumcising his Son: And upon *Joshua's* circumcising the *Israelites* (Circumcision not being observ'd during their Stay in the Wilderness, when they had no Communication with *Egypt*) the Lord himself says, *This Day have I rolled away the Reproach of Egypt from off you.*

Can. Chron. p. 73, & d. Edit. Francof.

Exod. 4. 24.

Josh. 5. 2-9.

THE

THE Heathen World must have very gross Conceptions, not only of their inferior Gods, but of the Father of Gods and Men; when they imagined him of so cruel a Nature, as to be delighted with the butchering of innocent Animals; and that the Stench of burnt Flesh shou'd be such a *sweet-smelling Savour in his Nostrils*, as to atone for the Wickedness of Men; and wicked, no doubt, they were, when they had such an Atonement at hand. So that the *Harmless* were burnt to save the *Hurtful*; and Men, the less *innocent* they grew, the more they destroy'd the innocent Beasts.

*Non Bove mactato Cœlestia Numina gaudent;
Sed, quæ præstanda est, & sine Teste, Fide.*

Ovid. Epist. p. 89.
Ep. 20. v. 181.

IF the *Pagans* believ'd Beasts were not given them for Food, why did they eat them? Or, if they thought they were, why did they ungratefully throw back the Gifts of God on the Donor? Or, why did they not drown, or bury them, rather than make such a Stench in burning them, as many Times by the Number of Sacrifices, might infect the very Air?

'Tis probable, that the Heathen Priests who shar'd with their Gods, and reserv'd the best Bits for themselves, had the chief Hand in this as well as in all other gainful Superstitions; while the deluded People, who many Times suffer'd by the Scarcity of Provisions, caus'd by the great Number of Sacrifices, were at vast Expence in maintaining these holy Butchers, whose very Trade inspir'd them with Cruelty.

AND 'tis probable, this absurd Notion prevail'd like all other Absurdities by Degrees, and at first Sacrifices were only

only religious Feasts, either in Commemoration of some National Benefit ; where after God, their great Benefactor, was celebrated, they commemorated their particular Benefactors ; or else Feasts were made on a private Account by the Master of a Family, upon shearing his Sheep, gathering in the Fruits of the Earth, &c. where those that assisted him were entertained, and joyfully join'd in giving Thanks to the Author of those Blessings, without destroying, or burning any Part of the Creature given for their Use ; and the Master of the Family was, no doubt, Master of the Ceremonies at his own Feast : But this simple Method not pleasing certain Persons, who were resolv'd to have the best Share in all those religious Feasts, they perswaded the People that it was necessary some Part of the Flesh of Animals was to be burnt to feed the hungry Nostrils of the Deity, delighted with the sweet Savour of burnt Flesh ; and the better Part to be reserv'd unburnt for themselves, to whom the Slaying of the Animals, and the offering them up was appropriated. 'Tis then no Wonder the Number of the Gods multiply'd, since the more Gods, the more Sacrifices, and the Priests had better Fare ; and that they might not want plentiful Feastings, the People were made to believe, that they cou'd learn their Fortunes from the Intrails of the Beasts they sacrific'd ; and this Method continues to this Day in those Places, where they have not found out an easier, and better Way of cheating the People.

B. You seem to be of the Sentiments of the Poet, who says,

*Natural Religion was easy first, and plain ;
Tales made it Mystery, Offerings made it Gain ;
Sacrifices and Shews were at length prepar'd,
The Priests eat roast Meat, and the People star'd.*

A. THE

Chap. 8. *Christianity as old as the Creation.*

A. THE Pagans sacrificing of Beasts was not so bad in itself, as what it soon occasion'd, *human Sacrifices*; which, Men being of greater Value than Beasts, were believ'd to be more acceptable; and Parents, stifling all natural Affections, offer'd up their own Children, as the most precious Gifts they cou'd bestow on the Gods; except offering up their own Lives, and sacrificing themselves: And as this Sacrifice was thought most meritorious, so the more excellent the Persons, the more agreeable the Sacrifice; and there are even at this Day, a Number of superstitious People in *India*, who out of great Devotion throw themselves under the Wheels of those heavy Chariots, which carry the Images of their Gods, and are crush'd to Death; and Others, out of the same mistaken Zeal, cut off their Flesh, and mangle their Limbs till they fall down dead; which makes the People rejoice at their Sufferings, and reverence them as most holy Martyrs; concluding that nothing but the Truth of their Religion cou'd enable them to shew such terrible Marks of Zeal on themselves, and become voluntary Martyrs.

B. I pity those deluded People, and wonder how Men can persuade themselves, that the Mercy of Heaven can be purchas'd by such Barbarities, as human Nature left to itself wou'd start at.

A. THAT the Priests were every where for human Sacrifices is no Wonder; since They had the appointing the Men, whom the Gods did the great Honour to accept for Burnt-Offerings: And indeed, after People once gave themselves up to believe in their Priests, there was nothing too absurd to be receiv'd as divine. When the *Ethiopians*, for Instance, were once persuaded that their Priests were intimately acquainted with the Will of the Gods, it was too late

late to dispute any Orders they pretended to bring from them; and therefore, their Kings as well as private Persons; well-knowing that the Commands of the Immortal Gods were not to be disputed by Mortals, most religiously executed themselves as soon as the Pleasure of the Gods was signify'd to them by those sacred Messengers of their Will; and this blind Devotion might have continu'd till now, had not an Infidel Prince, bred up in the profane Philosophy of the *Greeks*, put a Stop to it by surprising, and destroying at once all those holy Impostors.

Diod. Sic. l. 3.
p. 102. B. & d.

We learn from *Bernier* and Others, that it has been an immemorial Custom in *Indostan*, for the Women (so great a Power has Superstition even over that fearful Sex) to burn themselves with their dead Husbands, adorn'd with all the incombustible Riches they cou'd procure on their own Account; or that the Folly of Others wou'd send by them to their dead Friends: These their Priests secure to themselves, by telling the credulous People that the Ashes of the dead, and all burnt with them, are too sacred to be touch'd by any but themselves.

B. THO' human Sacrifices obtain'd among the Heathen, yet sure the *Levitical* Law did not approve, or countenance any such Practices.

A. AUTHORS are divided, and they who maintain the affirmative say, that the *Levitical* Law distinguishes between ordinary Vows, and those Vows where any Thing is devoted to the Lord; and this they pretend is plain from *Levit.* 27. where after many surprising Things about common Vows, by which the Things themselves, or Money in lieu of them, were to be given to the Priests; at *Ver.* 28. it comes to Things devoted, and says, *Notwithstanding, no devoted Thing that a Man shall devote unto the Lord, of all that be*

he hath, both of Men and Beasts, and of the Field of his Possession, shall be sold or redeem'd; every Thing devoted is most holy unto the Lord. And what is meant by being most holy unto the Lord, is explain'd in the next Verse, None devoted, which shall be devoted of Man shall be redeem'd; but shall surely be put to Death. And they say it was before declar'd, that whatever was the Lord's, as the First-born of Man and Beast, was to be slain; if God did not order its Redemption. The First-born of Man was to be redeem'd; ^{Exod. 30. 12, 13 & 34. 19.} and that of an Ass, if not redeem'd by a Lamb, was to have ^{20.} its Neck broke; and the Captives taken in War, which fell to the Lord's Share, there being no Order for redeeming, were, as is own'd by all, to be slain.

THE Prophet Micah reckons the putting every devoted Thing to Death among the Jewish Institutions, in saying, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before him with Burnt-Offerings, with Calves of a Year old? Will the Lord be pleased with Thousands of Rams, or with ten Thousand of Rivers of Oil? Shall I give my First-born for my Transgression; the Fruit of my Body for the Sin of my Soul? He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee; but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* ^{Mic. 6. 6, to 8.}

HERE the sacrificing of a Man's own Children is mention'd equally with the sacrificing of Beasts, which is allow'd to be a Jewish Institution; how absurdly must the Prophet be suppos'd to have argu'd, after he hath preferr'd Justice and Mercy to a Thing commanded by God, if he shou'd go on to prefer it before a Thing abhorr'd by God!

IF there cou'd be any Doubt in this Matter, *Jephtha's* Vow wou'd clear it up; for this *Jewish* Hero made the Vow when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and after making it he wrought a great Deliverance for *Israel*: The Words of the Vow are, *Whatsoever* (or rather *Whosoever*) *cometh forth of the Doors of my House to meet me, when I return in Peace from the Children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's; and I will offer it up to him for a Burnt-Offering.* A Vow made by such an extraordinary Person, and upon such an extraordinary Occasion, looks as tho' something extraordinarily pleasing to God, was design'd by that Vow; which, tho' domestick Animals might have been sacrific'd, must relate to Persons capable of acting with Design; viz. of coming out of his House to meet him after the Victory; which to his great Grief his only Child did. Had there been any Way of dispensing with this solemn Vow, he, since he had two Month's Time to consider, wou'd, no doubt, have found it out; but he says, *I have opened my Mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back;* and he did with her according to his Vow. And his Daughter, worthy of a better Fate, was willing her Father shou'd execute his cruel Vow, only regretting that she dy'd without being a Mother in *Israel*; for that Reason she was yearly mourn'd by the Daughters of *Israel*.

Ep. to Julian; ST. *Jerome*, as well as the Author of the *Questions to*
To. i. p. 208. *the Orthodox*, thinks that *Jephtha's* Piety in sacrificing his
Justini Oper. Daughter, was the Reason of St. *Paul's* numbring him
p. 454. A. among the just Persons. And,
455. C.

BISHOP *Smalridge*, in his Sermon about *Jephtha's* Vow, says, " That all the Fathers, as well as our own *Homilies*,
" own that he sacrific'd his Daughter.

THE

THE *Jews* cou'd not think it absolutely unlawful for a Father to sacrifice an innocent Child; since *Abraham* was highly extoll'd for being ready to sacrifice his only Son, and that too without the least Expostulation; tho' he was importunate with God to save an inhospitable, idolatrous, and incestuous City.

No Wonder that a single Person in the Power of another might be devoted to God, since free, and independent Nations were so devoted; and it was by virtue of such a Vow, which *Israel* vowed unto the Lord, that the *Canaanites*, who had never done *Israel* the least Injury, Men, Women, and Children were to be utterly destroy'd. Numb. 21. 2, 3.

HAD the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, who reckons *Jeptha* among the *Jewish* Heroes, thought the *Jews* abhor'd all human Sacrifices, he wou'd not, at least, without some Apology for the Lawfulness of human Sacrifices have declar'd one such Sacrifice, where the same Person was both Sacrificer and Sacrifice, to have been of infinite Value, in saying, that *Christ* offer'd up himself; and that *He* put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself; and endeavours to shew the *Hebrews*, that the Blood of the Beasts that were sacrific'd, was of no Value in Comparifon of the Blood of *Christ*, who, thro' the eternal Spirit, offer'd up himself without Spot to God. Chap. 11. 32. Heb. 7. 27. 9. 26. Ver. 13. Ver. 14.

B. ADMITTING the *Jewish* Law allow'd human Sacrifices, yet the Christian Religion, sure, forbids (since *Christ*, according to the Apostle, sacrific'd himself) all human Sacrifices.

A. IF putting innocent, and conscientious Men to Death on Account of Religion, may be call'd *sacrificing* them, there have been more human Sacrifices than ever were before in the World, and those too not offer'd up to God, but

to the Devil, by burning their Bodies, and sentencing their Souls to Hell ; and even at this Day the *Papists* to persuade the Spectators, that those they condemn to the Flames immediately go to Hell, dress them up in a *San Benito*, or a Coat painted all over with Flames and Devils ; and then take their Leave of each Sufferer with this charitable Expression, *Jam animam tuam tradimus Diabolo*.

B. I must own, this Bigotry, which has had such terrible Effects among Christians, was little felt, or known in the *Pagan* World.

A. Is not this cursed Bigotry owing to the most unworthy Notions Bigots have entertain'd of the divine Perfections, imagining they do Service to the Creator, by hurting, and destroying his Creatures ? The fiery Zeal of such Wretches is capable of any Mischief : Most other Men, tho' ever so wicked, have some Remains of Pity and Humanity, some Checks of Conscience, and tho' ever so much provok'd, Time will assuage their Anger ; but the Bigot feels not the least Remorse, nor can Time abate his Fury ; and he is so far from having any Pity, that he glories in the cruellest Actions, and thinks the more hellish Facts he commits, the more he merits Heaven ; and very often gets the Reputation of a Saint for acting the Part of a Devil. So that his Notions of God and Religion, serve only to make him infinitely a worse Man, than if he had been without any Belief ; for then he cou'd have no Motives from the next World for doing Mischief ; nor wou'd his Disbelief strip him of his Humanity, or hinder him, if he judg'd rightly of his own Interest, from acting so by his Fellow-Creatures, as, taking in the whole of his Life, was best for him to do.

B. You represent Bigotry more odious than it is, in making it worse than Atheism itself.

A. As

A. As Bigotry is the worst Sort of Superstition, so you know the Philosophers in general suppose Superstition to be worse than Atheism itself. *Plutarch*, in particular, makes it his Business in his Tract of *Disdemony*, or *Superstition*, to prove that Atheism, tho' an Opinion false, and even stupid, yet is far less hurtful to Men than Superstition; and reflects less Dishonour on the Deity itself: For he interprets *Disdemony*, to be the continual Dread of a Deity, no less mischievous than powerful; which is the most odious Character that can belong to any intellectual Being, and has given Birth to those shocking Notions, and dismal Rites in divine Worship, that have either run Men into Atheism, and expos'd Religion itself to Ridicule and Contempt; or made Mankind the Dupe of designing Knaves, and taught fierce Bigots to exercise, and then sanctify the most inhuman Barbarities. —

“ THE Atheist, *says he*, knows no God at all; the Superstitious none but what is monstrous and terrible; mistaking for dreadful, what is most kind and beneficent; for tyrannical, what is truly paternal; for mischievously inclin'd, what is full of providential Care; nay, for a Being brutally savage and fierce, what is meer Goodness itself. Shall then, *adds he*, the Atheist be counted impious, and not this superstitious Person much more so? I, for my part, had rather Men should say there is no such Person as *Plutarch*, than that he is a Man inconstant, fickle, prone to Anger, ready to revenge himself upon the slightest Occasion, and full of Indignation for meer Trifles, &c. And yet this is no more than what the superstitious think of the Deity; whom of Consequence they must as well hate as fear: They worship, indeed, and adore him; and so do Men even those very Tyrants they

p. 171. A. " wou'd be glad of an Opportunity to destroy. The Atheist
 &c. " contributes not in the least to Superstition ; but Supersti-
 " tion having given out so hideous an Idea of the Deity ;
 " some have been frighted into the utter Disbelief of any
 " such Being ; because they think it much better, nay,
 " more reasonable, that there shou'd be no Deity, than one
 " whom they see more Reason to hate, and abominate ;
 p. 171. E. " than to love, honour, and reverence. Thus inconfide-
 " rate Men, shock'd at the Deformity of Superstition, run
 " directly into its opposite Extream *Atheism*, heedlessly skip-
 " ping over true Piety, that is the Golden Mean between
 " both." So much for this Philosopher of the *Gentiles*, I
 shall now quote a noble Christian Philosopher, who says,
Bacon's Essays, " *Atheism leaves a Man to Sense, to Philosophy, to natural*
 p. 96. " *Pity, to Laws, to Reputation ; all which may be Guides*
 " *to an outward moral Virtue, tho' Religion were not: But*
 " *Superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute*
 " *Monarchy in the Minds of Men. Therefore Atheism did*
 " *never perturb States ; for it makes Men wary of them-*
 " *selves, as looking no further : And we see the Times in-*
 " *clining to Atheism (as the Time of Augustus Cæsar)*
 " *were civil Times. But Superstition hath been the Confu-*
 " *sion of many States, and bringeth in a new Primum Mo-*
 " *bile, that ravisheth all the Spheres of Government.*"

I grant that next to a real Bigot, an Atheist in Masque-
 rade may do most Mischief ; but then it is by hiding the
 Atheist, and personating the Bigot ; and under Colour of
 promoting Religion, advancing Priest-craft. And there
 are no small Number of these Atheists, if what the famous
 Scaligerans, *Scaliger* says is true, *Quicumque Jesuitæ vel Ecclesiastici Ro-*
 p. 126. *mæ in honoribus vivunt, Athei sunt.* And Men must have a
 great deal of Charity to think better of any Protestant, whose
 pre-

pretended Zeal carries him, contrary to the Principles of his Religion, into persecuting Measures.

HAD the Heathen distinguish'd themselves by *Creeds* made out of Spite to one another, and mutually persecuted each other about the Worship of their Gods, they wou'd soon have made the Number of their Votaries as few as the Gods they worshipp'd; but we don't find (except in *Egypt* that Mother-land of Superstition) they ever quarrell'd about their Gods; tho' their Gods sometimes quarrell'd, and fought about their Votaries: No, it was a Maxim with them, *Deorum injuriæ, Diis curæ.*

By the universal Liberty that was allow'd amongst the Ancients, "Matters (as a noble Author observes) were so
"ballanc'd, that Reason had fair Play; Learning, and Sci-
"ence flourish'd; wonderful was the Harmony and Tem-
"per, which arose from these Contrarieties. Thus Super-
"stition, and Enthusiasm were mildly treated; and being
"let alone, they never rag'd to that Degree as to occasion
"Bloodshed, Wars, Persecutions, and Devastations; but a
"new Sort of Policy, — has made us leap the Bounds of
"natural Humanity, and out of a super-natural Charity, has
"taught us the Way of plaguing one another most devout-
"ly. It has rais'd an Antipathy, that no temporal Interest
"could ever do, and entail'd on us a mutual Hatred to all
"Eternity. And savage Zeal, with meek and pious Sem-
"blance; works dreadful Massacre; and for Heaven's-sake
" (horrid Pretence) makes desolate the Earth.

Letter of En-
thusiasm. p.
18. al. 28-
29.

Ib. 388.

AND as this noble Author observes, "The *Zelus*, Characterist.
" (or the *Jupiter* of Strangers) was, among the An- Vol. 3. p. 153.
"cients, one of the solemn Characters of Divinity, the pe- 154.
"culiar Attribute of the supreme Deity; benign to Man-
"kind, and recommending universal Love, mutual Kind-
"ness

“ nefs and Benignity between the remotest, and most unlike
 “ of human Race. Such was the ancient Heathen Charity,
 “ and pious Duty towards the whole of Mankind ; both
 “ those of different Nations and different Worship.

BUT, good God ! how different a Character do Bigots give us of the Deity, making him an unjust, cruel, and inconsistent Being ; requiring all Men to judge for themselves, and act according to their Consciences ; and yet authorising some among them to judge for others, and to punish them for not acting according to the Consciences of those Judges, tho’ ever so much against their own.

THESE Bigots thought they were authoris’d to punish all those that differ with them in their religious Worship, as God’s Enemies ; but had they consider’d, that God alone cou’d discern Mens Hearts, and alone discover whether any, by conscientiously offering him a wrong Worship, cou’d become his Enemies ; and that infinite Wisdom best knew how to proportion the Punishment to the Fault, as well as infinite Power how to inflict it ; they wou’d, surely, have left it to God to judge for himself, in a Cause which immediately related to himself ; and where they were not so much as Parties concern’d, and as likely to be mistaken as those they wou’d punish. Can one, without Horror, think of Mens breaking through all the Rules of doing as they wou’d be done unto, in Order to set themselves up for Standards of Truth for God as well as Man ? Do not these impious Wretches suppose, that God is not able to judge for himself ; at least, not able to execute his own Judgment ? And that therefore, he has Recourse, forsooth, to their superior Knowledge or Power ; and they are to revenge his Injuries, root out his Enemies, and restore his lost Honour, tho’ with the Destruction of the better Part of Mankind ? But,

To

To do the Propagators of these blasphemous Notions Justice, they do not throw this Load of Scandal on the *Law of Nature*; or so much as pretend from thence to authorise their execrable Principles; but endeavour to support them by Traditional Religion; especially by misinterpreted Texts from the Old Testament; and thereby make, not only Natural and Reveal'd Religion, but the Old and New Testament (the latter of which requires doing Good both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*) contradict each other. But to return,

If what the Light of Nature teaches us concerning the divine Perfections, when duly attended to, is not only sufficient to hinder us from falling into Superstition of any Kind whatever; but, as I have already shown, demonstrates what God, from his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, can, or cannot command; how is it possible that the Law of Nature and Grace can differ? How can it be conceiv'd, that God's Laws, whether internally, or externally reveal'd, are not at all Times the same, when the Author of them is, and has been immutably the same for ever.





C H A P. IX.

Human Happiness being the ultimate Design and End of all Traditional, as well as Original Revelation, they must both prescribe the same Means; since those Means, which at one Time promote human Happiness, equally promote it at all Times.

B.  HOU'D I grant you, that *Natural and Reveal'd Religion, as they have the same Author, must have the same Ends; and that the ultimate End of all God's Laws, and consequently, of all Religion, is human Happiness*; yet there are several Things to be consider'd as subordinate Ends: And here, may not Original and Traditional Religion differ? since 'tis allow'd by all, that how immutable soever these subordinate Ends are, yet the Means to promote these Ends are various and mutable.

A. Your allowing these Means to be various and mutable, supposes no such Means so prescrib'd in the Gospel; but that, agreeably to the Law of Nature, they are to be vary'd as best suits that End for which they were ordain'd: To imagine the contrary, is to make Things, dependent on Circumstances, independent; Things that are proper only

only under some Circumstances, necessary under all Circumstances ; nay, to make Ends mutable, and Means immutable ; and that these are to continue the same, tho' by Change of Circumstances they become prejudicial ; nay, destructive to the End for which alone they were ordain'd. The more necessary any *End* is, there's the more Reason for People to be left at Liberty to consider in the vast Variety of Circumstances, and those too perpetually changing, what Means may be most proper for obtaining that End ; since these having no Worth in themselves, can only be valu'd according as they more or less conduce to the Purpose they were intended for ; and where God does not interpose, it is incumbent on human Discretion, chiefly ordain'd for this End, to make such Alterations as the Reason of Things requires.

DID not God always employ the most fit and most suitable Means, he wou'd act contrary to the Rules prescrib'd him by his own unerring Reason ; and so he wou'd, did he not leave Men at Liberty to use such Means, as their Reason, given for that Purpose, told them was fittest to be done, in all those Circumstances in which he had plac'd them ; because That wou'd be requiring of them a Conduct contrary to his own ; and consequently, a Conduct highly irrational : And therefore to alter One's Conduct, as Circumstances alter, is not only an Act of the greatest Prudence and Judgment, but is consistent with the greatest Steadiness.

As far as Divine Wisdom excels human, so far the divine Laws must excel human Laws in Clearness and Perspicuity ; as well as other Perfections. Whatever is confus'd and perplex'd, can never come from the clear Fountain of all Knowledge ; nor That which is obscure from the Father of inexhaustible Light ; and as far as you suppose God's

Laws are not plain to any Part of Mankind, so far you derogate from the Perfection of those Laws, and the Wisdom, and the Goodness of the divine Legislator ; who, since he has the framing of the Understanding of those to whom he dictates his Laws, can't but adapt one to the other : But how can we say, that infinite Wisdom speaks plainly to Mankind thro' all Generations, except we allow that his Commands extend not beyond moral Things ; and that in all Matters of a mutable Nature, which can only be consider'd as Means, he obliges them to act according as they judge most proper for bringing about those Ends.

UPON any other *Hypothesis*, human Laws have vastly the Advantage of the divine ; as being publish'd in the Language the Subjects understand, in a plain simple Style, without any allegorical, metaphorical, hyperbolical, or other forc'd Way of Expression ; and if Time discovers any Inconvenience, or any unforeseen Difficulties want to be clear'd up, the Legislature is ready at Hand ; or if in the mean Time, any Doubts about interpreting the Laws arise, there are standing Judges (accountable to the Legislature) in whose Determinations People are to acquiesce. But Mankind are not to expect, that the divine Legislator will, from Time to Time, make any Change in his Laws, and communicate them to all Nations in the Languages they understand ; nor can there be any Judges with a Power to oblige People by their Determinations ; because such a Power being without any Appeal, is the same as a Power to make divine Laws ; and consequently, the only Tribunal God has erected here on Earth (distinct from that he has mediately appointed by Men for their mutual Defence) is every Man's own Conscience ; which, as it can't but tell him, that God is the Author of all Things, so it must inform him, that
what-

whatever he finds himself oblig'd to do by the Circumstances he is in, he is oblig'd by God himself; who has dispos'd Things in that Order, and plac'd him in those Circumstances. 'Tis for want of observing this Rule, that the divine Writings are render'd so obscure; and the Infinity of Sermons, Notes, Comments and Paraphrases, which pretend to speak plainer than God himself, have encreas'd this Obscurity. If whatever tends to the Honour of God, and Good of Man, is evident from the Light of Nature, whence comes all this Uncertainty, Perplexity, Doubts and Difficulties? Is it not chiefly owing to the denying People that Liberty, which God, out of his infinite Goodness, has allow'd them by the Law of Nature; and hindring them from judging for themselves of the Means, which best tend to promote this End; and imposing on them, by the Terrors of temporal and eternal Punishment, such needless Speculations and useless Observances, as can't be consider'd either as Means or Ends?

B. You know that Divines, tho' they can't deny what you say to be true in general; yet they think there's an Exception as to Church-Matters, and that here Men are not permitted to use such Means as they themselves think best; but such only as those, who set up to be their *Spiritual Governors*, shall appoint.

A. NOTHING can be more absurd, than to suppose God has taken this Power from the People, who have an Interest to preserve Religion in its Purity (every Deviation from it being to their Prejudice) and plac'd it uncontrollably in the Hands of Men, who, having an Interest in corrupting it, do, generally speaking, so manage Matters, as if Religion was the Means, and their Power the End for which it was instituted. We do not find, that the *Mahometan* Cler-

gy cause any Confusion or Disorder among the *Musselmén*; and the *Pagan* Priests are scarce taken Notice of in Story, so little Mischief did they do; while *all Church-History* is full of the vilest, and most pernicious Things perpetrated by *Christian* Priests. The Christian Morals, you must own, are too pure and plain to cause this Difference; what then can it be imputed to, but that independent Power, which those Priests usurp'd; which, tho' they claim'd it as deriv'd from Heaven for promoting godly Discipline, has occasion'd general Disorder and Confusion? Endless have been the Quarrels ambitious Priests have had with Princes upon the Account of this Power, to the Stopping of Justice, and Subversion of almost all Civil Polity: Nor have the Ecclesiasticks been less embroil'd among themselves, each Set striving to engross a Power which can belong to no Mortal. And the Bishops, when they had no others to contest with, have ever contended among themselves about *Superiority*, the *Rights of their Sees*, and the *Limits of their Jurisdictions*; and when their Choice depended on the People, they frequently, especially in their Contentions about the greater Sees, run Things on to Blood and Slaughter: And I appeal to their own Historians, whether the Ecclesiasticks ever scrupl'd any Method to obtain this Power; and whenever they got it, whether an insupportable Tyranny over Body and Mind, with the utter Ruin of Religion, was not the Consequence? And whether it had not, where exercis'd to the Height, more fatal Effects than all the Superstition of the *Gentiles*? Look the World round, you shall every where find Men more or less miserable, as they have been more or less debarr'd the Right of acting according to the best of their Understanding in Matters relating to Religion.

WHILE

WHILE every Church, or Congregation of Christians; as in the Apostolical Days, chose; and maintain'd their own Ministers, and order'd among themselves whatever requir'd a special Determination no Inconveniences happen'd; but as soon as this simple and natural Method was broke, and the Clergy were form'd into a closely-united Body, with that Subordination and Dependance they had on one another; the Christian World was enslav'd; and Religion forc'd to give Way to destructive Superstition.

WHICH could never have happen'd, if the Christians had observ'd these general Rules, obligatory by the Light of Nature, as well as the Gospel; and which are alike given to every Christian, and oblige one as well as another; such as; "Doing all Things for the Honour of God, for Edification, for Order, for Decency; for fleeing false Teachers; Seducers, Deceivers; for avoiding Scandal, and offending weak Brethren, &c." And here since *Every One* must judge for himself, and can't make over this Right to any other, must not all Church-Matters be manag'd by common Consent?

IN a Word, If we consider the infinite Variety of Circumstances; the different Manners and Customs that prevail in different Places; the Prejudices of the weak, ignorant, and superstitious; and the Designs of ambitious Men; there's nothing of a mutable Nature, if once esteem'd immutably fix'd by God, but must sometimes become prejudicial to the End 'twas intended to promote; especially in a Religion design'd to extend over the whole World, as well as to last to the End of it. There are but two Ways of avoiding this Inconvenience; either to suppose that the Founder of this Religion will, from Time to Time, himself ordain such Alterations in Things of a mutable Nature,

ture, as those Circumstances, which are different in different Places, do require ; or else, that he has left the Parties concern'd, to act in all Places according to Discretion in such mutable Matters.

B. You labour this Point ; but there are few of your Sentiment.

A. If you mean Ecclesiasticks, perhaps, you are in the right ; tho' I'm sure, I have the Church of *England* on my Side, if judicious *Hooker* may be allow'd to understand its Constitution, as well as the Nature of *Ecclesiastical Polity*. He, in the Tenth Section of his Third Book, maintains this Proposition, that " Neither God being the Author of Laws, nor his committing them to Scripture, nor the Continuance of the End for which they were instituted, is Reason sufficient to prove they are unchangeable : " Where he admirably well distinguishes between Things in their own Nature immutable, and Matters of outward Order and Polity, which he supposes daily changeable ; and says, " The Nature of every Law must be judg'd by the End for which it was made ; and by the Aptness of the Thing therein prescrib'd to the same End. — When a Thing does cease to be available to the End which gave it Being, the Continuance of it must appear superfluous. — That which the Necessity of some special Time doth cause to be enjoin'd, binds no longer than that Time ; but does afterwards become free. Laws, tho' both ordain'd of God himself, and the Ends for which they were ordain'd continuing, may notwithstanding cease, if by Alteration of Time, or Persons, they are found insufficient to attain to that End. In which respect why may we not presume, that God doth even call for such a Change or Alteration, as the very Nature of the Things themselves doth make
" neces-

“ necessary ? — God never ordain’d any Thing which
 “ could be better’d, yet many Things he hath, that have
 “ been chang’d, and that for the better ; that which suc-
 “ ceedeth as better now, when Change is requir’d, had been
 “ worse, when that which is now chang’d was instituted.
 “ — In this Case, Men do not presume to change God’s
 “ Ordinance, but yield thereunto, requiring itself to be
 “ chang’d.” And he applies this Reasoning honestly in
 saying, “ The best Way for *us* were to hold, even as they
 “ do, that in the Scripture there must needs be found some
 “ particular Form of Church-Polity, which God has insti-
 “ tuted, and which, for that very Cause belongeth to all
 “ Churches, to all Times ; but with any such partial Eye
 “ to respect ourselves, and by Cunning to make those Things
 “ seem the truest, which are the fittest to serve our Pur-
 “ pose, is a Thing we neither like, nor mean to follow.”
 And let me add, that most, if not all our Divines from the
Reformation till the Time of the *Laudean* Faction, were in
 the same Sentiments ; and from the Mutability of such
 Things as are Means to an End, prov’d there cou’d be no
 particular Form of Church-Polity establish’d by divine Au-
 thority : And they argu’d from the Example of good King
Hezekiah, who, without Regard to the salutiferous Virtue
 the *Brazen Serpent* once had, broke it to Pieces when per-
 verted to a superstitious Use. And,

ALL, who believe *Means* in their own Nature are mu-
 table, must, if consistent with themselves, agree with
 Mr. *Hooker* : This is so very apparent, that nothing but
 Interest can make any One talk otherwise ; therefore, I
 shall only quote the late Dean of *Canterbury*, who, in
 a Sermon preach’d before the University of *Cambridge*, and
 publish’d at their Request, says, “ That the very Temper,
 “ and

Scrm. at the " and Composition of the Scripture is such, as necessarily
 Commen. at " refers us to some other Rule ; for this is a System of
 Cambr. p. 12. " mix'd, and very different Duties, some of eternal and uni-
 " versal Obligation ; Others occasional and particular, li-
 " mited to Times and Circumstances ; and when these Oc-
 " casions and Circumstances ceas'd, the Matter of the Com-
 " mand was lost ; and the whole Reason and Force of it
 " sunk of Course : Now those Things being oftentimes de-
 " liver'd promiscuously, and in general Terms, Men must
 " of Necessity have Recourse to some other Rule to di-
 " stinguish, and guide them in making the just Difference
 " between the one, and the other Sort."

AND what other Rule is there, by which we can di-
 stinguish rightly in this important Matter, but what arises
 from the Things themselves ; those which have an innate
 Worth and Goodness are of an eternal and universal Oblig-
 ation ; Others, which have no such Worth, can be consider'd
 only as Means occasionally accommodated to particular
 Times, Places, Persons, and Circumstances ; which, of
 Course, must cease to oblige, when they cease to conduce
 to the End for which they were appointed ; or Others be-
 come more conducive : And this will more fully appear, if
 we consider, as the above-mention'd Author observes, that
 " The Circumstances of human Life are infinite, and de-
 " pend on a Multitude of Accidents not to be foreseen ;
 " and consequently not to be provided against. Hence
 " Laws must run in general Terms, and sometimes the In-
 " tent of the Law is best fulfill'd by running contrary to the
 " Letter ; and therefore, Reason and Honesty must guide
 " us to the Fitness of the Thing, and a great Scope must be
 " left to Equity and Discretion." And surely, we must
 not suppose, that Reason, Honesty, Equity, and Discretion
 will

Ib. p. 13.

will teach us one Thing, and the Traditional Law another; especially considering that in all God's Laws, 'tis the Reason of the Law that makes it Law.

B. BY the Reasoning of such Divines, I can't perceive the Use of any occasional Commands, since they suppose these can't oblige People longer than they judge it fit to observe them; otherwise there cou'd be no Difference between occasional and eternal Precepts; and what they judge fit and proper to be done, they are oblig'd to do without any occasional Commands; so that according to them, whether there are, or are not any occasional Commands, human Discretion is left at Liberty to judge what is fit, or not fit to be observ'd; which, I think, is supposing all such Commands needless; yet the Authors you quote suppose, contrary to your *Hypothesis*, there have been such Commands; particularly in relation to the *Jewish* State.

A. THE *Jews*, taking the Story to be literally true, being upon their coming out of *Egypt* a free People, had a Right by the Law of Nature to choose what Government and Governor they pleas'd; and God wou'd not act so inconsistent a Part, as to deprive them of any of these Rights he had given them by the Law of Nature; and therefore did not take upon him the civil Administration of their Affairs, till he had obtain'd their express Consent; so that here he acted not as Governor of the Universe, but by a Power deriv'd from the People by Virtue of the *Horeb* Covenant; and the Presumption is, that where there is no such Contract, God will not exercise such a Power; especially considering that tho' the *Jews* rejected God himself from reigning over them, and were for choosing a new King, yet he bids *Samuel* thrice in the same Chapter to *bearken to the Voice of the People*; but of this, and all other Arguments of this Nature, more fully hereafter.

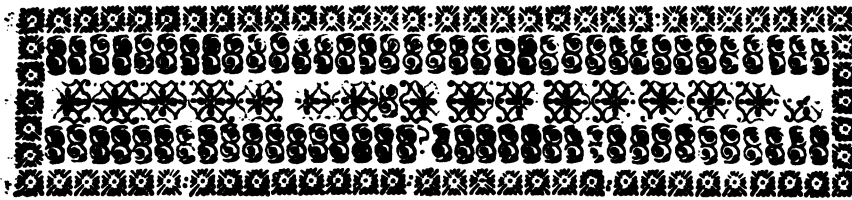
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B. THE

B. THE Reasons you have given do not fully satisfy me, but that some Things may be requir'd by God as Governor of the Universe, which are meerly positive ; nay, that *Rites*, and *Ceremonies*, *Signs*, or *Symbols* might be arbitrarily enjoin'd, and so intermix'd with Matters of Morality, as to bind the Consciences of all Men at all Times ; and therefore, if you please, we will review this Point.

A. WITH all my Heart ; for this alone is the Point that must decide this Question, *Whether Natural and Reveal'd Religion do really differ ?* As for *Natural Religion*, that, as you well know, takes in all those Duties which flow from the Reason and Nature of Things, and the Relations we stand in to God and our Fellow-Creatures ; and consequently was there an instituted Religion which differs from That of Nature, its Precepts must be arbitrary, as not founded on the Nature and Reason of Things, but depending on meer Will and Pleasure ; otherwise it wou'd be the same with Natural Religion : And tho' 'tis difficult to prove a Negative, yet, I think, I can fully shew you, by adding other Reasons to those already mention'd, that God, the great Governor of the Universe, can't give Mankind any such Precepts ; and consequently, that *Natural* and *Reveal'd Religion* only differ in the Manner of their being deliver'd.





CHAP. X.

God does not act arbitrarily, or interpose unnecessarily ; but leaves those Things, that can only be consider'd as Means (and as such are in their own Nature mutable) to human Discretion, to determine as it thinks most conducing to those Things, which are in their own Nature obligatory.



IN Order to settle this Point, 'tis necessary to see how far this Natural Law extends ; it not only commands that *Evil Doers should be punish'd*, but that Men, according to the different Circumstances they are under, shou'd take the most proper Methods for doing it, and vary as Exigences require ; so it not only requires that Justice shou'd be done Men as to their several Claims, but that the readiest, and most effectual Way of doing it shou'd be taken ; and the same may be said of all other Instances of this Nature. If God interposes further, and prescribes a particular Way of doing these Things, from which Men at no Time, or upon no Account ought to vary ; he not only interposes unnecessarily, but to the Prejudice of the End for which he thus interposes. And as to Matters

relating to the Worship of God, it is the Voice of Nature that God shou'd be publickly worshipp'd; and that Men shou'd do this in the most convenient Way, by appointing amongst themselves Time, Place, Persons, and all other Things which require special Determination: And, certainly, there's as much Reason that Things of this Nature shou'd be left to human Discretion, as any other whatever; considering the different Conditions and Circumstances which Christians may be under, and the Handle designing Men might otherwise take, to impose upon weak Persons what they please, on Pretence of divine Right.

THIS being premis'd, the sole Question is, Whether God, who, for many Ages, did not command, or forbid any Thing, but what was moral or immoral; nor yet does so to the greatest Part of Mankind, has, in some Places and in some Cases, broke into the Rule of his own Conduct, and issu'd out certain Commands which have no Foundation in Reason; by obliging Men to observe such Things as wou'd not oblige were they not impos'd; or if the Imposition was taken off, wou'd immediately return to their primitive Indifference?

To suppose then, such Commands, is it not to suppose God acts arbitrarily, and commands for commanding-sake; and that too under the severest Penalties? Can such Commands be the Effects of infinite Wisdom and Goodness? Or, if there be no Reason, why a Thing shou'd be done at all; or if to be done, why it shou'd be done rather this Way than that Way; or why Men shou'd not vary Means, as they judge most conducive to the End, for whose sake alone they were design'd? Can there be any Cause, why a Being, which never acts unnecessarily, and whose Commands are all the Effects of infinite Wisdom, shou'd interpose? 'Tis so far from

from being necessary for God to interpose in such Cases as these, that it only serves for a Handle to human Imposition ; for there's nothing so indifferent, but may, if believ'd to have Divinity stamp'd upon it, be perverted by designing Men to the vilest Purposes ; and in Truth, there's nothing of this Nature introduc'd into Religion ; but what, I am afraid, has been some Time or other so perverted.

ONE wou'd think it a Thing wholly indifferent, who sprinkl'd an Infant, or from whose Hands we receiv'd the Sacramental Bread and Wine, as long as the Rules of Decency and Order were observ'd ; yet has there not been a Set of Men, who, on Pretence of a divine Right to do those Things, have made the Christian World believe, they have a discretionary Power to bestow, or withhold the Means of Salvation ; and, by Virtue of this Claim, have over-aw'd them into slavish Obedience, and a blind Submission.

THERE'S no Good or Hurt in drawing two Lines cross one another, and yet what have not Priests made the poor People believe they cou'd do by Virtue of it ; as *Curing Diseases, Driving away Devils*, and doing an Infinity of other Miracles ? And in short, they have made it one of the chief Engines of their Craft, for the better carrying on of which, they persuaded the People to adore the *Cross*, miraculously found after it had been bury'd about three hundred Years ; and the Wood of it has since so wonderfully encreas'd, as to be able to make innumerable Crosses, whereof each Bit contain'd the Virtue of the whole.

CONFESSION of Sins to honest and judicious Persons, might be of Service, by the prudent Advice they gave how to avoid the like Sins for the future ; but the *Papish Priests* claiming a Power by divine Right to *absolve People upon Confession*, have been let into the Secrets of all Persons, and
by.

by Virtue of it have govern'd all Things ; and have made the *Sins of the People*, not to be pardon'd but on their Terms, the *Harvest* of the *Priests*.

AMONG the *Jews*, the *Anointing with Oil* was look'd on as very medicinal, and generally us'd in Sickness ; they pray'd, and anointed the Sick in Hopes of a Recovery : But tho' the Anointing in these colder Climates is thought of no Use in Sickness, yet the *Papists* have built a most superstitious Practice on it, which, for the greater Reverence, they call the Sacrament of *Extreme Unction* ; and which their Priests are not to administer as long as there's Hopes of Recovery.

WHAT can be more indifferent, or harmless, consider'd in themselves, than the Ceremonies of *Oiling the Heads of Kings*, and *Laying Hands on the Heads of Elders or Presbyters* ; and yet what absurd Pretences have not Priests, who have the Art of turning the most indifferent Things to a superstitious Use, drawn from thence to the Prejudice of both Church and State.

It was an ancient Custom among the *Hebrews*, when they pray'd for a Blessing on any Person, to lay Hands on him : Thus *Jacob* laid his Hands on the Sons of *Joseph*, and *Moses* on *Joshua*. And among the primitive Christians, when any Congregation chose their Minister, they pray'd that he might duly execute that Office, to which they had ordain'd him ; and in praying, he that was the Mouth of the Congregation (the whole Assembly not being able conveniently to do it) laid his Hands on him.

THIS gave a Rise to the Clergy to pretend, that their *Laying on of Hands upon a Man*, was necessary to qualify him for the Ministry ; they by that Act having given him the Holy Ghost, and an indelible Character with certain spiritual Powers ;

Powers ; so that the People must either be without Ministers, or take one they had thus ordain'd, however unqualify'd they might think him.

It's a Thing indifferent in itself, whether *Men meet to pray in this, or that Place* ; but the Christians out of a superstitious Reverence to the Reliques of the Martyrs, usually praying at their Tombs, came by Degrees, as their Reverence for them increas'd, to offer their Prayers to them ; which was a great Change from their praying for them among the other dead, as was in the first Ages a general Practice ; and which, some of our High-church Priests are zealous for restoring, and pretend we have better Proof for its being a Catholick Doctrine, than for the Authority of several Books of Scripture.

THE primitive Christians frequently consulting their Clergy in relation to Marriages, gave them a Handle to set up for Judges by divine Right in all matrimonial Causes ; and many prohibited Degrees as well as spiritual Relations, such as *God-fathers* and *God-mothers*, &c. were introduc'd, to give the Clergy frequent Opportunities to grant, at their own Price, Dispensations ; by which Means the Succession and Inheritance not only of private Estates, but of Principalities and Kingdoms, in a great Measure depended on them : And as an Appendix to this spiritual Usurpation, they hook'd in the Cognizance of all *carnal Causes*, *Incontinence* in single as well as married Persons. Thus you see, how easily Mankind may be abus'd, where 'tis believ'd, that Religion can require any Thing inconsistent with the Rights and Liberties God has allow'd them by the Law of Nature ; and how dangerous 'tis to trust any Thing with Men, who pretend a divine Right to whatever they can lay Hands on. To give an Instance how severely this divine Right was exerted by
the

Puffind. Intr.
to History.
p. 170.

the Pope, as Head of the Church : “ *Robert*, King of
“ *France*, having marry’d a Lady of the House of *Burgundy*,
“ a Match very advantageous to the State, and tho’ he had
“ the Consent of his Bishops, yet he, and the whole King-
“ dom were excommunicated by the Pope, because this
“ Lady was in the fourth Degree of Consanguinity, and the
“ King had been God-father to her Child by a former Hus-
“ band ; which so distress’d the poor King, that all his Ser-
“ vants, except three or four, deserted him ; and no One
“ wou’d touch the Victuals which came from his Table,
“ which were, therefore, thrown to the Dogs.

I shall give one Instance more, Men are oblig’d to avoid
as much as conveniently they can the infectious Conversation
of immoral Persons ; and it was, no Doubt, at first a Duty
in a special Manner, for Christians, compass’d round with
Pagans, to observe this Rule in relation to their own Body,
and agree to shun any such Person as One who had his *Fa-
ther’s Wife* ; and tho’ this is no more than what is daily
done in private Societies, and was easily practis’d amongst
Christians when they were but few ; yet because the Mini-
ster might collect the Votes, and declare the Opinion of the
Assembly, the Clergy by Degrees not only excluded the Con-
gregation from this their natural Right ; but claim’d, as
giv’n them by Heaven, a Power to excommunicate whom
they please, even their own Sovereign ; and that too for
Things relating to their own Interest : And they forbid not
only their own Congregations, but all Christians, on Peril
of their Salvation, to *avoid all Commerce with the Excom-
municated*, and ordain’d, that *if he did not in forty Days
give the Church Satisfaction, the Magistrate was bound to im-
prison him, and confiscate his Estate* : And the Princes, in-
stead of resenting these Incroachments on their Power, had
so

so little Sense as to pass this into a Law ; not imagining this Treatment wou'd reach them ; but they soon felt, that the Church claim'd the same Power over them as over other Christians ; looking on all to be alike subject to their spiritual Power. And accordingly Kings were often excommunicated, their Subjects absolv'd of their Oaths of Allegiance, and their Dominions given to more orthodox Princes to be held of the Church ; which, no doubt, was in a flourishing Condition, when she, as often as her Interest requir'd it, absolv'd Princes of their Oaths to their Subjects, and Subjects of theirs to their Sovereigns ; and by Virtue of her spiritual Power, dispos'd, as she thought fit, of Mens Estates, Honours, and even Lives. *What has been may be !* And in all Probability wou'd be, were the Clergy as united among themselves as formerly.

In a Word, there's nothing in itself so indifferent, either as to Matter or Manner ; but if it be engrafted into Religion, and monopoliz'd by the Priests, may endanger the Substance of it : This has been plainly shewn by those Divines, who, at the *Reformation*, and since, have argu'd against all Impositions ; they have prov'd that most of the Corruptions of *Papery* began at some Rites, which seem'd at first very innocent ; but were afterwards abus'd to Superstition and Idolatry, and swell'd up to that Bulk, as to oppress, and stifle True Religion with their Number and Weight. And, indeed, there's no Sect, but complains how superstitiously Rites and Ceremonies are us'd by all, except themselves ; and since I am defending the Liberties given by God to Mankind, and which, without Ingratitude to the Donor, as well as Injury to ourselves, we can't give up ; I do not doubt you will hear me with Patience, because if I prove my Point, I shall, it may be hoped, in some Measure

put an End to those otherwise endless Disputes, which divide, and distract the Christian World.

WHATSOEVER is in itself indifferent, whether as to Matter or Manner, must be so to an All-wise Being, who judges of Things as they are; and for the same Reason that he commands Things which are good, and forbids those which are evil, he leaves Men at Liberty in all Things indifferent; and 'tis in These only, that our Liberty of acting as we please consists.

THINGS, which are of no Value in themselves, can be no Motives to an All-wise Being to punish us; or to clog our Happiness with any such needless Observances: And consequently, Men, as far as they assert our future Happiness, or any Part of it, to depend on such Things, do so far derogate from the Wisdom and Goodness of God; and from those Motives we have to love, and honour him. The arbitrary Commands of a Tyrant may be obey'd out of Fear, but just and rational Laws alone can move the Affection of rational Creatures.

Is it reasonable to believe, an All-wise and Gracious Being is so fond of indifferent Things, that he subjects his Children to suffer even in this Life on their Account? And yet you must own, if he has made these the Subject of his Commands, they ought to suffer every Thing rather than not observe them; but if God will not have Men punish'd in this World, and much less in the next, upon the Account of Things indifferent; they can never be the Subject of his Commands.

Tho' a judicious Author supposes a Form of divine Worship in itself indifferent, may be requir'd by God for the sake of Peace and Unity; yet at the same Time he contends, that, "God does not expect we shou'd comply with That
" Form,

“ Form, if it brings Misery on ourselves, or Confusion to Chubb's Suppl. to his Prev. Quest. 27, 28.
 “ the Publick ; because that wou'd be preferring a Thing
 “ in itself indifferent to the Happiness of our Lives, and the
 “ Peace of the Publick ; and that to suppose the contrary,
 “ wou'd be breaking in upon the spotless Character of our
 “ heavenly Father, by representing him not as a Wise and
 “ Good, but a peevish and ill-natur'd Being ; who takes an
 “ unreasonable Resentment at the prudent Conduct of his
 “ Children.” But will not This as strongly infer, that God
 cou'd not command the Observing such Things, which, if
 observ'd, wou'd destroy his moral Character ; and which,
 instead of preserving Peace and Unity, wou'd bring Misery
 on private Persons, and Confusion on the Publick ; whereas
 these Blessings of Peace and Unity can never be obtain'd by
 a forc'd Conformity, nor by any other Method than allow-
 ing People their natural Liberty in all such Matters. And,

If Religion consists in imitating the Perfections of God,
 what Perfection of God do the superstitious imitate, when
 they contend, as *pro Aris & Focis*, for Forms, Rites, and
 Ceremonies ?

If in Heaven there's no Room for arbitrary Precepts, to
 incumber that moral Goodness which is the sole Business of
 the Bless'd above ; what cou'd hinder us, did we but make
 That too our only Concern here, from enjoying a Sort of
 Heaven on Earth, free from all tyrannical Impositions, and
 endless Quarrels about indifferent Things ?

In a Word, If there's nothing in a Religion which comes
 from God, but what is most excellent ; what Room can
 there be for indifferent Things ? Can such Things as have
 no Worth or Excellency, contribute to the Worth, or Ex-
 cellency of Religion ? If they cou'd, the more they a-
 bounded, the more excellent wou'd Religion be ; which yet

is so far from being true, even in the Opinion of those who contend for such Things, that even they, when they are to shew the Excellency of the Christian Religion, recommend it for having but few of those Things; which is supposing it loses of its Excellency in Proportion to what it has of this Nature; and that they have a higher and more honourable Conception of it, who believe it has no such Mixture to spoil its Beauty, and destroy its Simplicity; but that, like its Author, 'tis wholly spiritual, and as such, worthy its divine Original.

ONE wou'd think these Men must appear ridiculous to themselves, who, tho' they recommend the Christian Religion, as purely spiritual, in Opposition to the carnal Religion of the *Jews*; yet at the same Time contend, it has some Ordinances as little spiritual as any the *Jews* had; and put a greater Stress upon 'em, than ever the *Jews* did on any of theirs.

If God's Works shew infinite Wisdom, there's no Reason to imagine but his Laws do the same; but then they must be moral Laws, for these alone can speak his Wisdom as plainly to all Mankind as his Works do: They both alike have the Character of infinite Wisdom impress'd on them, and both alike discover their divine Original.

If all God's Laws are of a Piece, must they not all be built on the eternal Reason of Things? Nay, if That be sufficient to determine him in one Case, it must be so in all; but on the contrary, if God acts arbitrarily in any one Instance, he must, or at least may, do so in all; since no foreign Cause, nothing but his Nature, cou'd make him act so. But God forbid we shou'd imagine, that any of his Laws have not impress'd on them the same Character of the highest Wisdom and Goodness, that is impress'd on the whole Frame of Nature, and on every Part of it. TIS

'Tis impossible Men shou'd have any just Idea of the Perfections of God, who think that the Dictates of infinite Wisdom do not carry their own Evidence with them ; or are not by their own innate Worth discoverable to all Mankind. Were it not so, how cou'd they be distinguish'd from the uncertain Opinions of weak and fallible Men ; not to say the Whimfies and Reveries of crack'd-brain'd Enthusiasts ? How shocking is it to hear Divines cry, that " Certain Things, Scott's Sermon.
" were they not to be ador'd as Mysteries, ought to be ex- Vol. 3. p. 316.
" ploded as Absurdities.

If we suppose any arbitrary Commands in the Gospel, we place Christians in a worse Condition than those under no Law but that of Nature, which requires nothing but what is moral ; and consequently the greatest Part of Mankind, who are to be judg'd by the Law they know, and not by the Law they do not know, are, on this Supposition, in a better Condition as to the next World than Christians ; because they do not hazard the Favour of God by any Mistakes, or Omissions in such Matters.

To suppose some Men, who, tho' they exactly obey the Law of Nature, may yet be punish'd, even eternally, for not obeying another Law besides ; wou'd be to make God deal infinitely less mercifully with them, than with those that have no other Law : And yet in this miserable Case are all Christians involv'd, if the Gospel requires such Things as the Law of Nature does not ; and that too under the severest Penalties. And I may add, that even as to temporal Happiness, they who think Original and Traditional Revelation don't differ, are in the better State ; since they must delight in their Duty, as having nothing requir'd of them, but what they most evidently see tends to their Good ; and consequently are free (no small Happiness) from all panick Fears ; while they, who

who believe there are Things meerly positive in Religion, of which Reason affords no Light how they are to be perform'd, or even what they are, must lye under endless Doubts and Fears ; and according to the Measure of their Superstition, be wrought upon by designing Men to hate, damn, and persecute one another about such Observances, as we see is actually done every where by the different Sects ; who are so absurd as to believe a God of infinite Wisdom and Goodness can give his Creatures arbitrary Commands.

Treatise of
Superstition.
To. 2. p. 170.
E, F.

WHEN Men are at a Loss to know from the Nature and Reason of Things, what to believe, and what to practice, and see every where endless Divisions ; they must be in continual Dread of such an arbitrary Being, as their unmanly and irrational Fears represent God to be. *Plutarch* makes this Difference between the Atheist and Superstitious ; “ One believes no Deity, the Other wishes there was none ; if he believes, 'tis against his Will ; mistrust he dares not, or call his Thoughts in Question ; but could he, with Security, at once throw off that oppressive Fear, which, like the Rock of *Tantalus*, impends, and presses over him, he would with equal Joy spurn his enslaving Thoughts, and embrace the Atheist's State and Opinion, as the happiest Deliverance. Atheists are free of Superstition, but the superstitious are in Will and Inclination Atheists, tho' impotent in Thought, and unable to believe of the divine Being as they willingly would.” And I am afraid, this now is the Case with most of these superstitious Persons, who represent God as a most cruel Being, damning Men to Eternity, even for mistaken Opinions ; or about such Things too as have no Foundation in Reason. And perhaps, the endeavouring to drown all Thoughts of such a tyrannical Deity, is no small Occasion of that gross Immorality, which does

does every where prevail, and must ever do so where Superstition abounds.

'Tis Mens not being govern'd by the Reason of Things, which makes them divided about Trifles; and lay the utmost Stress on such Things as wise Men wou'd be asham'd of. 'Tis on the Account of These, that the different Sects set the highest Value on themselves, and think they are the peculiar Favourites of Heaven; while they condemn all others for Opinions and Practices not more senseless, than those themselves look on as Essentials. And were it not in so serious a Matter, it wou'd be diverting to see how they damn one another, for placing Religion in whimsical Notions, and fantastical Rites and Ceremonies, without making the least Reflection on what they themselves are doing.

WHAT Reason has a *Papist*, for Instance, to laugh at an *Indian*, who thinks it contributes to his future Happiness to dye with a Cow's Tail in his Hands, while he lays as great a Stress on rubbing a dying Man with Oil. Has not the *Indian* as much Right to moralize this Action of his, and shew its Significancy; as the *Papist* any of his mystick Rites, or *Hocus Pocus* Tricks? which have as little Foundation in the Nature or Reason of Things.

SUPPOSE One came from the furthestmost Parts of the Earth, vouching it as a divine Revelation, that the Nails of our Children are, at a certain Time, to be par'd by certain Persons with certain Ceremonies, in Order to make them capable of Salvation; and that such as dy'd before their Nails were thus par'd, remain'd for ever in a very wretched State; wou'd not every One here, without examining into this Man's Mission, or without Regard to those spiritual Things signify'd under Paring of Nails, reject this Belief as unworthy of having God for its Author. And yet as absurd

Hide's Pref. to as this may appear to us, the superstitious *Mahometans* think
Bevins of the they are oblig'd to have their Nails par'd during their Sick-
Turkish Litur. ness, if they apprehend it to be mortal.
87. &c.

THEY must be very little acquainted with the Nature of a spiritual Religion, who think it can any Ways consist in not going to Rest when Men are sleepy; not eating, when they are hungry; or abstaining from, or using certain Meats and Drinks at stated Times; and in Washings, Sprinklings, and Lustrations by Blood or Water; and yet these Things were in so high a Repute with most of the *Pagans*, that they thought they wou'd atone for the greatest Immoralities.

Ovid. Fast.
l. 2. 45.

*Ab nimium faciles, qui tristia crimina cædis
 Flumineâ Tolli posse putetis aquâ.*

THE *Taurobolia*, or the Bedawbing a Man in a Pit, all over with the Blood of a Bull, which fell on him thorow Holes made in the Plank on which the Beast was slain, was believ'd to wash away all his Sins, and he, happy Man, regenerated to Eternity, provided that once in twenty Years he renewed this mystical Regeneration; and not only great Persons, but whole Cities might perform this religious Ceremony by Deputation, and receive the Benefit. A short Account of this you meet with in *Fontenelle's History of Oracles* taken from *Prudentius*.

Peri Stephanon, de Romanis, p. 135, 136. See Salmat. ad Helio- gab. c. 7.

THO' the Heathen Priests made the People believe they cou'd be clean from their Sins by Sacrifices, and other external Things, yet it was as themselves had the Application of them; they were the Persons to whom the Gods had committed the *Religious Rubbing Brusbres*; tho' the Men of Sense among the *Pagans* were not thus to be impos'd on; which made *Tully* say,

Ani-

*Animi labes nec diuturnitate evanescere, nec amnibus ullis
elui potest.* De Leg. l. 2.
c. 10.

Laëtantius seems to be of another Opinion, in saying, Institut. l. 3.
c. 26. n. 9.
“ Give us One that is unjust, foolish, and a Sinner; and in
“ one Instant he shall be just, prudent, and innocent; with
“ one Laver all his Wickedness shall be wash’d away.

IN a Word, while Priests of what Denomination soever pretend Authority to absolve Sinners, and the People are so void of Sense as to rely on their Absolution; Natural Religion, which puts the whole Strefs on internal Penitence and true Virtue in the Soul, will be despis’d; as allowing no *Succedaneum*, no Commuting, or Compounding with Heaven. And, indeed, all such commuting, or compounding Powers, wherever they are suppos’d to be lodg’d, serve as a Bank of Credit for the Transgressors; and are a mighty Incitement to all Manner of Villany: And in former Days, the great Men, after having oppress’d and plunder’d People, thought to compound with Heaven, by letting the Clergy share in the Spoil; and ’tis on this Notion so many Abbies and Monasteries have been founded; and the superstitious, as long as they are perswaded there is any Virtue in Externals, will, as we see by constant Experience, chiefly depend on such Things. And I may add,

THIS Doctrine, that one Man may not only merit for himself by doing more than God requires of him; but that the Merit of such Actions may be transfer’d to another, who has done less than God requires of him, has been a great Incitement to Wickedness; and those who have acted a most immoral Part during their whole Lives, have believ’d they might comfortably rely on it; nothing being thought too hard for Merit and Mediation.

THESE are none, I think, now so absurd, as in Words to maintain, that there's the least Variableness in God, much less that he is an arbitrary Being, commanding Things for Commanding-sake ; yet are not they, who assert there are merely positive Things in the Christian Religion, guilty of this Absurdity ; in supposing that God, who had the Goodness for a long Time, not to confine Mankind to any indifferent Things ; yet at length chang'd his Mind, and repented of this great Goodness ; and arbitrarily depriv'd, they will not say, all Mankind, but no small Number of this Liberty ; and requir'd of them the Belief of certain useless Speculations, and the Practice of certain indifferent Things on the severest Penalties ? And when they lament that the Christian World, even from the earliest Days, has been in perpetual Broils about such Things, do they not suppose that God can give arbitrary Commands, and that those Commands are involv'd in great Obscurity ? Whereas, if merely positive Things were requir'd, those, not being like Matters of Morality, discoverable by their own Light, wou'd be made as plain as infinite Wisdom could render them ; and to prevent their being perverted to serve ill Purposes, we shou'd have been punctually told When, How, and by Whom, those arbitrary Things shou'd be apply'd, as well as that they were to be obligatory for ever.

B. IF God has reveal'd any Thing in a Way liable to be mistaken, he can't be displeas'd with sincere People for mistaking it.

A. THAT's very true, but certainly the End of God's giving any Precepts, was not to deliver them so obscurely that People might be faultless if they mistook ; but to make 'em so plain that they could not well mistake : And this is agreeable to infinite Wisdom directed by infinite Goodness, which,
cer-

certainly, will give us equal Degrees of Evidence for religious Truths, which so much concern us, as it has done for Truths of less Importance.

For my Part, I can't help being of the Sentiments of a learned Divine, who, after having prov'd at large, that Morality is capable of Demonstration, concludes with saying,
 " I shall only here repeat, that Man being a reasonable Fiddes's Body of Divinity. Par. 2. B. 1. c. 11.
 " Agent, Reason is the Law and Rule of his Actions ; there's
 " no Truth in *Mathematicks* more clear, and incontestable
 " than This. Now 'tis as easy for him, when he examines
 " his Actions by this Rule, to see whether they agree together, as to know when two Lines are compar'd, whether
 " they are of the same, or a different Length. — Why
 " should Demonstration then be confin'd only to Numbers
 " and Figures ? — Nay, if we argue from the Importance of Morality, it will be found much more agreeable
 " to the Goodness of God, who gave us our intellectual Faculties, that the Truths which are of the greatest Concern to us, should, if we make a due Use of those Faculties, admit of the greatest Evidence." I think, I need only add, that was there any Thing but Morality necessary to constitute true Religion, we might be certain that the Goodness of God wou'd give us a Demonstration for it, equal to that he has given us for Morality. But,

If there are now Things which are not moral in Religion, does not That suppose a Change of Mind in God ; and then where will you stop ? For if Changeableness was not a Perfection, it wou'd not be in him ; and if all his Perfections are infinite, must not This be so too ? And is it not as reasonable to suppose, he may command some indifferent Things to Day, and others to Morrow ; or some in this Part of the World, and some in another ; as at first to com-

command moral, and then super-add indifferent Things? If indifferent Things can contribute to the Perfection of Revelation, there may be endless Revelations; and the last always more perfect, as having new indifferent Things. It was not about Things of a moral Nature, that there were such Divisions in the primitive Times, and that *Montanism* spread itself over a great Part of the Christian

Feet. Hist. l. 5.
c. 14.

River's Pic. in
Disc. to Tert.
Ap. l. p. 149

World; the Followers of *Montanus*, as *Eusebius* writes, boasting that he was the Paraclet, and that *Priscilla* and *Maximilla* his Companions were his Prophetesses? And *Tertulian*, as is own'd by the Translator of his Apology, says, "That the Law, and the Prophets were to be look'd on as the Infancy; and the Gospel, as it were, the Youth; but that there was no compleat Perfection to be found, but in the Instruction of the Holy Ghost, who spake by *Montanus*:" But to make some Apology for his laps'd Father, he says, "The Arch-Heretick *Montanus* supported the Character of a most holy, mortify'd, and extraordinary Person for a considerable Time; the World rung with the Visions and Prophecies of him, and his two Damsels; and the Face of Severity and Saintship consecrated their Reveries, and made real Possession pass for Inspiration. — The Churches of *Pbrygia*, and afterwards other Churches, divided upon the Account of these new Revelations; and even the very Bishop of *Rome* himself for some Time espous'd the Vanity, and made much of the Impostor." And had he continu'd to do so, it might, perhaps, have obtain'd; since we find the Christians in the primitive Times came intirely into a more gross Imposture, and had Faith for the most palpable Forgery of the *Sybilline* Oracles being writ by real Prophetesses under divine Inspirations. And the whole Christian World for more than the two first Centu-

ries

ries believ'd the *Millenarian* Heresy, as it is now call'd ; for which, indeed, they pretended other Proofs than the divine Authority of the *Sybils*. And there has scarce been an Age since, but where some such Attempt has been made, and That of *Popery*, which is the grossest Attempt on the Credulity of Mankind succeeded ; tho' the *Monks* in the twelfth Century were not satisfy'd even with that ; and therefore, endeavour'd to introduce a new Gospel, call'd *Evan-*^{Offer de Christ}
gelium eternum; or the *Gospel of the Holy Ghost* ; and af-^{Ecclef. Success-}
firm'd, that this Gospel of the Spirit excell'd That of^{fine & statu-}
Christ's ; as much as the Light of the Sun does that of^{1. 9. Sect. 2.}
the Moon.

IN short, to this Belief, that there may be Things in Religion not founded on Nature and Reason, and that these may be reserv'd for this, or that Period of Time, are owing all the Visions and Reveries among the *Papists*, and other Enthusiastick Christians ; and upon this absurd Notion is founded the most spreading Religion of *Mahomet*, who pretended to be the Paraclet promis'd by Jesus to compleat, and perfect all Things : And,

IN a Word, to this Belief are owing all the false Revelations that ever were in the World ; and except we allow there are certain Tests flowing from the Nature of Things, whereby the meanest Capacities may distinguish Truth from Falshood, we shall for ever be liable to be impos'd on by Mad-men as well as Impostors.

IF God can command some Things arbitrarily, we can't be certain, but that he may command all Things so ; for tho' some Commands should relate to Things in their own Nature good, yet how can we know that an arbitrary Being commands them for this Reason ; and, consequently, since an arbitrary Will may change each
Mo-

Moment, we can never be certain of the Will of such a Being. And,

To suppose that God by the Law of Nature leaves Men at Liberty in all indifferent Things, and yet by a positive Law restrains this Liberty in certain Parts and Ages of the World; is to suppose God determines one Way by immediate, and another Way by mediate Revelation; both Laws too subsisting at the same Time.

B. We say that the Law of Nature, however immutable as to Good and Evil, has enjoin'd nothing in relation to indifferent Things; so that there's a large Field, in which all Legislators, human as well as divine, may exert their Power.

A. It's true, the Law of Nature leaves Men at Liberty to act as they please in all indifferent Matters; and if any traditional Law abridges this Liberty, so far 'tis contrary to that of Nature, and invades those Rights which Nature and its Author has given Mankind.

HUMAN Legislators are so far from having a Right to deprive their Subjects of this Liberty, that their main End in submitting to Government is, to be protected in acting as they think fit in all such Cases where no One is injur'd; and herein the whole of human Liberty consists, the contrary being a State of meer Vassalage; and Men are more or less miserable, according as they are more or less depriv'd of this Liberty; especially in Matters of meer Religion, wherein they ought to be most free.

To suppose God has *in these last Days*, as they are call'd in Scripture, depriv'd any Part of Mankind of that Liberty which before was granted to all, wou'd be to make him act unreasonably; since all those Reasons which oblig'd him
to

to command good, or forbid evil Things, must wholly cease in relation to a Subject, which by being indifferent partakes of neither; and was there any Reason to deprive Men of their Liberty in indifferent Things, they wou'd then cease to be indifferent; on the contrary the same Reasons which oblige him to interpose in Things, whose Nature is either good or evil, forbids it in indifferent Things; since Mens Happiness depends on their Liberty in all such Things. Whatever is unreasonable for God do, is contrary to the eternal Law of his Nature; and consequently, to deprive Men in any of these Cases, is to make the Dictates of his Nature, and his revealed Will to clash.

In short, the Law of Nature either is, or is not, a perfect Law; if the first, 'tis not capable of Additions; if the last, does it not argue Want of Wisdom in the Legislator, in first enacting such an imperfect Law, and then in letting it continue thus imperfect from Age to Age; and at last thinking to make it absolutely perfect, by adding some merely positive and arbitrary Precepts. To what End does God continually impress on Christians as well as Others this Law of Nature; since that was needless, had they another more perfect, and more plainly reveal'd.

If Men have been at all Times oblig'd to avoid Superstition, and embrace True Religion, there must have been at all Times, sufficient Marks of Distinction; which cou'd not arise from their having different Objects, since God is the Object of both; but from the having different Notions of him and his Conduct: Nay, allowing that the Light of Nature was sufficient to teach Men, that True Religion consists in entertaining such Notions of God as are worthy of him, and Superstition in such as are unworthy of him; yet That alone wou'd not enable Men, when they came to Particulars,

particulars, to distinguish one from the other : And, therefore, the same Light of Nature must teach them what Notions are worthy, and what unworthy of having God for their Author : But how can there be such Marks flowing from the Nature of Religion and Superstition, if what is Superstition by the Light of Nature, can, notwithstanding these Marks, be made a Part of Religion by Revelation.

Serm. Vol. 3. P. 42. If he, who resembles God most is like to understand him best, is it not “ because, as Bishop *Tillotson* observes, he “ finds these Perfections in some Measure in himself, which “ he contemplates in the divine Nature ; and nothing gives “ a Man so sure a Notion of Things as Practice and Experience ; every good Man is in some Degree Partaker “ of the divine Nature, and feels That in himself, which “ he conceives to be in God ; so that this Man does experience what others do but talk of ; he sees the Image “ of God in himself, and is able to discourse of him from “ an inward Sense and Feeling of his Excellency.” But this would not be just Arguing, if God was an arbitrary Being, and cou’d command his Creatures Things which carried no Perfection or Goodness with them.

IN a Word, if the Essence of Religion consists in believing and practising such Things, as have a real Worth and Excellency in them, tending to the Honour of God, and the Good of Man ; the Essence of Superstition, which is its Opposite, must consist in imagining to propitiate an All-wise and gracious Being by such Things as have no Worth or Excellency in them ; such as may as well not be done, as done ; or as well done this as that Way. Superstition

The Abridgm. is defin’d by Dr. *H. More* (and all our divines speak to the
of his Morals same Purpose) *to be That Impiety, by which a Man considers*
or Account of *God to be so light or passionate, as with trivial Things, either to*
Virtue l. 2. p. 122. *be*

be pleas'd, or else mov'd to Wrath. Can any Thing be more trivial, than useless Speculations, and unnecessary Observations?

How numerous soever Christians may be, tho' they are but few in Comparison of the rest of Mankind, yet the Church of Christ, by the Confession of all Parties, is a very small Body of Men; each Sect, tho' they complain of one another's Uncharitableness, yet they, excluding all other Sects, either as *Schismatics* or *Hereticks*, confine Salvation to their own Church. Dr. Scot says, "While Men behold the State of Religion thus miserably broken and divided, and the Professors of it crumbl'd into so many Sects and Parties, and each Party spitting Fire and Damnation at its Adversary; so that, if all say true, or, indeed, any Two of them in five hundred Sects, which there are in the World; (and for ought, I know, there may be five thousand) it is five hundred to One, but that every One is damn'd, because every One damns All but itself; and itself is damn'd by four hundred and ninety nine." How, I say, can these Differences be avoided, as long as Men take into their Notion of Religion; nay, make unnecessary Things necessary Parts of it; and if many of our Divines have got rid of these absurd Notions, is it not because they are, what in Contempt they are call'd, *Rationalists*?

Christ. Life,
P. 11. Vol. 1.
C. 3. P. 112.

THE pious Bishop *Taylor* says, "He could not expect, but that God wou'd some Way or other punish Christians, by Reason of their pertinacious Disputing of Things unnecessary, undeterminable and unprofitable; and for their hating and persecuting their Brethren (which shou'd be as dear to them as their own Lives) for not consenting to one anothers Follies and senseless Vanities."

Epistle Ded.
to Liberty of
Prophecy.

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BUT

BUT, is there any certain Way of judging what are unnecessary or unprofitable Things, but by the Rules here laid down, of judging of Things from their Nature and Tendency? Without observing this Rule, there's nothing so trifling, or senseless, but People may be persuaded to place Religion in, and be in continual Broils about it. If a Dispute between two Preachers, whether the first Words in the Lord's Prayer shou'd be translated *Father our*, or *Our Father*, cou'd cause such Disturbances, as it lately did at *Hamburg*; what is there so indifferent, if once believ'd to belong to Religion, but may have pernicious Effects? And there are a number of Instances in all Ages, where Things as trifling have occasion'd strange Disorders.

Treat of
Schism.

And the primitive Times were not free from them, the memorable Mr. *Hales* gives this Account of the then Quarrel about the Time of keeping *Easter*; "It being, *says he*,
 " upon Error taken for necessary, that an *Easter* must be
 " kept; and upon worse than Error, if I may so speak, (for
 " it was no less than a Point of *Judaism* forc'd upon the
 " Church) thought further necessary, that the Ground for the
 " Time of our keeping that Feast, must be the Rule left by
 " *Moses* to the *Jews*; there arose a stout Question, Whether
 " we were to celebrate it with the *Jews* on the fourteenth
 " Moon, or the Sunday following? This Matter, tho' most
 " unnecessary, most vain, yet caus'd as great a Combustion
 " as ever was in the Church; the *West* separating from the
 " *East* for many Years together. In this fantastical Hurry,
 " I can't see but all the World were *Schismatics*, neither
 " can any Thing excuse them from that Imputation, ex-
 " cepting only this, that we charitably suppose that all Par-
 " ties, out of Conscience did what they did. A Thing
 " which befel them, thro' the Ignorance of their Guides;
 " and

“and because thro’ Sloth and blind Obedience Men examin’d not the Things they were taught; but like Beasts of Burden patiently couch’d down, and indifferently underwent whatever their Superiors laid upon them.

“And can we, says Dr. Burnet, think without Astonishment, that such Matters, as giving the Sacrament in leavened or unleavened Bread; or an Explication of the Profession of the Holy Ghost, whether it was from the Father and the Son, or from the Father by the Son; cou’d have rent the *Greek* and *Latin* Churches so violently one from another, that the *Latines*, rather than assist the other, look’d on till they were destroy’d by the *Ottoman* Family?”

Burnet’s Sermon
Ann. 1681.

AND other Instances he gives of fatal Disturbances from Disputes about Trifles; as the removing the Pictures of certain Bishops out of a Church occasion’d Image-Worship; for those who oppos’d their Removal, went so far as to maintain, that Pictures ought not only to be set up, but worshipp’d; which caus’d not only great Disorders in the *East*, but made *Italy* to revolt at the Pope’s Instigation: This Contest too begat another, Whether the Sacrament was only the Image, or the very Substance of Christ?

I might add, that the Dispute between the *Lutherans* and *Calvinists* about the Sacrament, tho’ it has created such fierce Animosities, is ~~mostly~~ verbal; since both Sides are against any Change in the Elements, and both Sides maintain a real Presence of the Body of Christ.

I need not have gone to distant Times and Places for Instances, our own late Divisious and Persecutions about such trifling Things, as Rites and Ceremonies, nay, Habits and Postures, wou’d in all likelyhood have ended in the utter Ruin both of Church and State, had not the blessed Revolution interpos’d.

Nature; and there's nothing of this Kind that Men will ~~not~~ come into, if they are made to believe they carry any Merit with them: These they will be punctual in observing, in Hopes to atone for indulging themselves in their darling Vices; which they, not knowing how to leave, and yet willing to secure their future Happiness, hope by the Help of such Expedients, to compound with Heaven; and then vainly imagine, they cannot have too many Things of this Nature; or shew too great a Zeal for the Practice of them, when assur'd by their Priests (who, as they fondly imagine, know the whole Counsel of God) that they are acceptable to the Deity; and tend to make him propitious to the religious Observers of them.

THE *Banditti*, and Bravoes most religiously observe the Orders of their Church, about ~~not eating Flesh~~, &c. and Instances of this Nature might be produc'd from the most immoral in all Churches; who, not satisfy'd with practising such Things themselves, think it highly meritorious to compel others to do the same. And, indeed, the Substance of Religion has been destroy'd in most Places to make Room for Superstition, Immorality, and Persecution; which last, when Men want Reason to support their Opinions, always supplies its Place. And are there not even now, Numbers in the best reform'd Churches, of the same

Christ. Life
Vol. 1. P. 2
c. 6. p. 376.

Sentiments with those Dr. *Scot* complains of? "Who, *he says*,
" persuade themselves, that God is wonderfully concern'd
" about small Things, about trifling Opinions and indiffe-
" rent Actions, and the Rites and Modes, and Appendages
" of Religion; and under this Persuasion they hope to atone
" for all the Immoralities of their Lives, by the Forms and
" Outfides of Religion; by uncommanded Severities, and
" affected Singularities; by contending for Opinions, and
stick-

“ stickling for Parties ; and being *pragmatically* zealous about the Borders and Fringes of Religion. And,

I’m afraid ’tis but too true, as is observ’d in the *Letters concerning Inspiration* ; that “ Men have thought it an Honour to be stil’d that which they call zealous Orthodox, to be firmly link’d to a certain Party, to load Others with Calumnies, and to damn by an absolute Authority the rest of Mankind ; but have taken no Care to demonstrate the Sincerity and Fervour of their Piety, by an exact Observation of the Gospel Morals ; which has come to pass by Reason that Orthodoxy agrees very well with our Passions ; whereas the severe Morals of the Gospel are incompatible with our Way of Living. ” And One wou’d be apt to think, that Zeal for speculative Opinions, and Zeal for Morality were scarce consistent, shou’d he form his Judgment from what he sees most practis’d. “ Moral Goodness, says Dr. Scot., is the great Stamp and Impression that renders Men current in the Esteem of God ; whereas on the contrary, the common Brand by which Hypocrites and false Pretenders to Religion are stigmatiz’d, is their being zealous for the Positives, and cold and indifferent as to the Morals of Religion. ”

“ AND, in general, we find mere moral Principles of such Weight, that in our Dealings with Men, we are seldom satisfy’d by the fullest Assurance giv’n us of their Zeal in Religion, till we hear something further of their Character. If we are told a Man is religious, we still ask *What are his Morals ?* But if we hear at first that he has honest moral Principles, and is a Man of natural Justice, and good Temper, we seldom think of the other Question, *Whether he be religious and devout ?* ”

IT is a general Observation in History, that where any Thing has had the Appearance only of Piety, and might be observ'd without any Virtue in the Soul, it easily found Entertainment among superstitious Nations. Hence *Tacitus* Hist. 5. 13—says, “ Men extremely liable to Superstition are at the same Time as violently averse to Religion.” *Le Clerc* not only makes the same Remark, but says, “ Those who had a confused Notion of Christian Piety, believ'd it could not maintain itself without the Help of outward Objects; and I know not what heathenish Pomp, which at last extinguish'd the Spirit of the Gospel, and substituted *Paganism* its Room.”

Life of *Prudentius* p. 317.
Eng. Transl.
& Bibl. Univ. To. 12, p. 173, 174.

WHATEVER Appearance it might have of Piety, what Virtue did it require in the Practice, to make War with the *Saracens* for the *Holy Land*; (tho' considering the Impieties committed there, it might be call'd *Unholy*;) yet so highly meritorious was this Project for several Ages thought to be, that vast Shoals of *Bigots* for its sake have frequently gone from the *West* to fight Men in the *East*, who never did them any Harm; and these *Bigots*, presuming on the Merits of this sacred Expedition, were most enormously flagitious.

B. IF this was Superstition, it was built on a Notion which had long before prevail'd, of believing it a Piece of Piety to visit *Jerusalem*, and the holy Places there. The great St. *Jerome* says, *Certe adorasse ubi steterunt Pedes Domini, Pars Fidei est*, &c. “ That it was undoubtedly a Part of Faith, to go, and worship in those Places, where the Feet of our Saviour had once stood; and to have a Sight of the Tracks, which at this Day continue fresh, both of his Nativity, Cross, and Passion.”

Ep. 144, ad
Desider. To. 3, p. 198. D.

A. IN

A. I believe St. Jerome, when he says, *We ought to worship where the Feet of our Lord stood*, chiefly intended his last Foot-steps when he mounted up to Heaven; *the Print of which*, says Sulp. Sever. Sulp. Sever. Sacred Hist. lib. 2, p. 100. Edit. Elzev. 1643. *remain to this Day. Quæcunque applicabantur, insolens humana suscipere terra respueret, excussis in ora apponentium sæpe marmoribus.—Et cum quotidie confluentium Fides certatim Domino calcata diripiat, damnum tamen arena non sentiat: & eadem adhuc sui speciem, velut impressis signata vestigiis, terra custodit.* And Paulinus says the same.

A strict Observance of such Things as require no Virtue in the Practice, and may with great Ease be punctually observ'd, makes the superstitious liable to be every where cheated by your *Tartuffs*, or *Mackw—bs*; while Men who put the whole Stress on Morality, are represented not only as Enemies to Religion, but even as Encouragers of Immorality, and meer Libertines, because they are for Liberty in thinking; tho' This can't fail to make Men see the Folly of Licentiousness in acting.

AND, indeed, we shall generally find those Ecclesiasticks, who inveigh most against *Free-Thinking*, are the real Encouragers of Immorality; by screening, not only the most immoral of their own Order on Pretence of preserving the Honour of the Church, tho' to the Dishonour of Religion; but also by laying the most moral, if they differ from them in speculative Points, under constant Sufferings, to enforce them to play the Hypocrites with God and Man; and who is it that the corrupt Part of the Clergy shew more Inveteracy against, than the very best Men of their own Order, for not approving these Methods?

It's worth while to remark, how differently Men are treated for Civil and Ecclesiastical Offences: "In *Civil Cases*, Diffic. & Dis- couragements of studying the Scriptures as a Right Reverend and Excellent Author observes, the Offender, if his Crime be not capital, suffers a *Temporary* p. 23. 24.

- “ Punishment, proportion’d to the Fault he has committed ;
 “ and when he has undergone That, nothing further is re-
 “ quir’d of him, except in some Cases to find Security for
 “ his good Behaviour for the future. But in Cases of *Here-*
 “ *fy*, there is no Regard to the *Degree* of the Offence, in
 “ the Punishment inflicted : Nor is there any *End* of it.
 “ ’Tis not enough to have suffer’d the *severest* Punishment,
 “ tho’ for the *smallest* Offence ; ’tis not enough to give Se-
 “ curity of not offending for the future : The innocent Of-
 “ fender must declare (what ’tis oftentimes *impossible* he
 “ should declare) that he has chang’d his Sentiments, and
 “ is become *Orthodox* ; and This, tho’ perhaps no Methods
 “ of *Conviction* have been used, except that of *Punishment*
 “ be one. This is the miserable Condition of a *Convict-*
 “ *Heretick* : The Punishment which fell on him for *expres-*
 “ *sing* Thoughts *heretical*, he must *continue* to endure for
 “ *barely thinking* ; which is a Thing not in his own Power,
 “ but depends on the *Evidence* that appears to him : He
 “ must for ever (cruel Justice !) for ever suffer for his
 “ *Private Thoughts* (tho’ they go not beyond his own
 “ Heart) the Punishment which some Overt-Act has once
 “ drawn upon him. To punish *toties quoties*, as often as
 “ those Overt-Act are repeated, will not satisfy the *Holy*
 “ *Office*. — If an Offender can’t be convicted of *Heresy*,
 “ he may however be convicted of Writing, or Speaking
 “ *against* the establish’d Doctrine of the Church ; and That
 “ will draw on him all the same Consequences, that *He-*
 “ *resy* would do. — Well does this Author advise,
 “ Whatever you do be *Orthodox* : *Orthodoxy* will cover a
 “ *Multitude of Sins*, but a *Cloud of Virtues* cannot cover
 “ the Want of the minutest Particle of *Orthodoxy*. —
 “ It may, I doubt not, be *demonstrated* with the greatest
 “ Evi-

Ib. p. 25.

Ib. p. 22.

Ib. p. 29.

“ Evidence, that *all Christian Churches* have suffer’d more
 “ by their *Zeal for Orthodoxy*, and by the violent Methods
 “ taken to promote it ; than from the utmost Efforts of
 “ their *greatest Enemies*. But for all that, the World will
 “ still think the same Methods necessary.

A Man, who has, or pretends to have a blind Zeal for those Things, which discriminate his Sect, tho’ he be ever so immoral, too often finds Countenance and Credit from them ; and tho’ thought a Devil by others, passes for a Saint with his own Party : So that the superstitious lye under strong Temptations to be vicious, and the vicious to act superstitiously. Nay,

“ THE Way that Men are apt to take to pacify God, Tillotson’s Sermon
 “ is, as Archbishop *Tillotson* observes, by some external Vol. 4. p. 51
 “ Piece of Religion. — Such as were Sacrifices among 6 & to. 2. p. 334
 “ the *Jews* and *Heathens*. — The *Jews* pitch’d upon
 “ those which were most pompous and solemn, the richest, and most costly ; so they might but keep their Sins,
 “ they were well enough content to offer up any Thing
 “ else to God ; they thought nothing too good for him,
 “ provided he would not oblige them to become better.

“ AND thus it is among ourselves, when we apprehend
 “ God is displeas’d with us. — We are content to do any
 “ Thing, but to *learn Righteousness*.

“ As to the Church of *Rome*, — *He says*, They (as
 “ they pretend) are the most skilful People in the World
 “ to pacify God. — I do not wrong them by representing them enquiring after this Manner : Shall I go before a *Crucifix*, and bow myself to it, as to the *High God* ? — To which of the Saints or Angels, shall I go to mediate for me, and interceed on my Behalf ?
 “ Will the Lord be pleas’d with Thousands of *Pater-*

“ *nofters*, or with ten Thousands of *Ave-Maries*? Shall
 “ the Hofl travel in Proceffion, or myfelf undertake a
 “ tedious *Pilgrimage*? Or fhall I lift myfelf a Soldier
 “ for the *Holy War*? Shall I give my Eftate to a *Con-*
 “ *vent*? Or chaftife, and punifh my Body for the Sin
 “ of my Soul?

THE Heathen Priests, knowing what would render them moft acceptable to the People, made the chief Part of their Religion to confift in gaudy Shews, pompous Ceremonies; and fuch other Tricks as ferv'd to amufe, and divert them, who, provided they entertain'd fuch Notions as created a Reverence for their Priests, and believ'd they could difcover to them the Will of their Gods; might be as leud, and wicked as their Gods themfelves:
 “ Are the Gods angry? Muft we repent of our Crimes,
 “ and re-enter into the Paths of Natural Juftice to divert their Thunder? Not at all; only take a Calf of
 “ fuch a Colour, calv'd at fuch a Time, and let his
 “ Throat be cut by a religious Butcher, in fuch a Drefs,
 “ with a confecrated Knife; and the Gods, as you will
 “ find by the Entrals, will be ftrait appeas'd.

THE *Mabometans* make the going-a Pilgrimage to *Mecca*, the higheft Act of Religion; and there, out of deep Devotion, play many Monkey-Tricks; and then, they return cleansed from all Impurity. As to the *Jewifh* Priests, and the Doctors, who depended on them, we learn from our Saviour, how they made the moral Law void by their vain Traditions; and that the Temple then, as the Church in After-Times, was made the grand Pretence. And what vile Things has not the abus'd Name of the Church patronis'd? Nay, even in the beft constituted Church, have we not lately had Numbers of Men fond of the Name of
 Highb.

High-Church, whose Religion chiefly consisted in drinking for the Church; cursing, swearing, and lying for the Church; raising Riots, Tumults, and Sedition, in Favour of a *Popish Pretender*, and all for the Security of the *Protestant Church of England*; and in having a profound Veneration for black Gowns, no Matter what the Wearers are; and a great Contempt for Men in black Cloaks, how deserving soever; and in firmly believing, that those who go to Places with Steeples can never be in the Wrong; and that those who go to Places without them can never be in the Right; without knowing what either hold, or so much as what is the true Meaning of even the Word *Church*?

WHAT Advantage have not the *Popish Priests* gain'd by their Arts of reconciling the Practice of Vice, with the Prospect of Heaven. The *Jesuits*, tho' the youngest Order, yet flourish most, being the most expert in this Artifice; as may be seen in *Monfieur Pascal's Provincial Letters*. But all the *Popish Priests* agree, in defending their Superstition by Fire and Faggot; while their Churches are open Sanctuaries for the most flagitious; which shews how sensible they are, that Superstition and Immorality support each other. And perhaps, 'tis but reasonable, that the Places, where they learn vile Things, shou'd protect them, when they have committed the vilest. 'Tis by these Means that Holy Church gets a terrible Party, who can't refuse to maim or murder, as their spiritual Protectors direct, for fear of being deliver'd up to civil Justice; and not only your mean Rogues, but even the greatest have been frequently screen'd this Way.

THE supposing indifferent Things equally commanded with Matters of Morality, tends to make Men believe they
are

are alike necessary: Nay, the former will, by Degrees, get the better with the Superstitious; and acquire such a Veneration by Age, as to make Men have Recourse to them upon all Occasions, tho' ever so unseasonable. If People can be so far impos'd on, as to admit such Things into their Religion, they will as easily be persuaded to put a greater Stress on Things, tho' of some Use in Religion, than their Nature will bare; to the confounding Things of the greatest Moment with those of the smallest; and if this is reckon'd Superstition, much more ought the other to be thought so.

THE not distinguishing Means from Ends, has been the Occasion of endless Superstition; and there have been Numbers, in all Ages, especially of the female Sex, who have thought themselves very religious, if they, tho' to the Neglect of their Family-Concerns, went from Church to Chapel, from Chapple to Church; and were punctual in observing all Church-Ceremonies, without regarding the End, for which alone they cou'd be instituted; so that instead of being humble, affable, and good, they have prov'd big with the worst Sort of Pride, spiritual Pride; censuring and despising their Neighbours, tho' ever so good, if they were not as punctual as themselves in observing those Things; and the Conceit they had of their own Godliness, has made them as troublesome at Home as Abroad, as bad Wives, as Neighbours.

UPON the whole, nothing can be of worse Consequence, than thus to depreciate Morality, by mixing Things of an indifferent Nature with it; because, as Experience shews, Men are more or less vertuous according to the Value they put on Virtue; and can a Man, who acts contrary to Reason not be an Enemy to a Religion founded on Reason? The Precepts of natural Religion, and the Rules of right Reason

Reason, can't but make strong Impressions on rational Creatures; what is fix'd on the Minds of Men, and wrought in as it were with their very Constitution, can't easily be broke thorow; human Nature is apt to start, and recoil at any such Attempt: And yet some have found a most effectual Way to break through it, by teaching Men, that the most moral Actions, without a right Notion forsooth in certain Things of another Nature, are to be look'd on, as *splendida Peccata*, and partaking of the Nature of Sin.

It is the chief Business of Preachers, to shew the Reasonableness of the Doctrines they teach, as the most effectual Way of operating on rational Creatures; and all the Laws of natural Religion being built on their own Reasonableness, They, who attend to the Dictates of their Reason, can scarce fail to pay a ready and chearful Obedience to all its Laws; but when Men take Things meerly on Authority, and would have taken the contrary on the same Authority; Reason is discarded, and rational Motives cease to operate; nor can Men any longer perform moral Duties with a free and chearful Mind; but slavishly obey, out of Fear, the suppos'd arbitrary Commands of a Being, too mighty to be contended with; and that only with a View to atone for Immoralities.

As long as Men believe the Good of the Society is the supreme Law, they will think it their Duty to be govern'd by that Law; and believing God requires nothing of them but what is for the Good of Mankind, will place the Whole of their Religion in benevolent Actions, and to the utmost of their Abilities copy after the divine Original; but if they are made to believe there are Things, which have no Relation to this Good, necessary to Salvation; they must suppose it their Duty,
to

to use such Means as will most effectually serve this Purpose ; and that God, in requiring the End, requires all those Means as will best secure and propagate it. And,

'Tis to this Principle we owe the most cruel Persecutions, Inquisitions, Crusades and Massacres ; and that *Princes* have endeavour'd, not only to destroy their Subjects, but to disinherit their own Issue, to make Room for supposititious Children. And,

'Tis to this Principle we also owe innumerable Tumults, Seditions, and Rebellions, even against the best of Princes ; as well as endless Feuds and Animosities in private Families, and among the nearest Relations : They who are govern'd by this Principle can't be good Men, good Subjects, good Citizens, or good Neighbours ; no Ties of Friendship or Gratitude, no Vows or Oaths can bind them, when the Interest of such Things, as they think, they are oblig'd to promote on Pain of God's Displeasure, requires the contrary Conduct.

THE *Jews*, as they were most superstitious, so were they most cruel ; and as the *Papists* have, beyond all other Christians, introduc'd into Religion, Things which are far from contributing to the Good of Mankind ; so they have exercis'd a matchless Cruelty for the Support of them : And no Wonder ; since their Priests gain by the Superstition of the People, and consequently, inspire them with a proportionate Hatred against all, who will not comply with it. And,

AMONG *Protestants* of what Denomination soever, they who lay the greatest Stress on useless Speculations, Rites, Modes and Ceremonies, are for the most Part four, ill-natur'd Persons, ready to come into any persecuting Measures

fures for their sake: But nothing has done so much Mischief as that most monstrous Opinion of *Imperium in Imperio*. Those, who pretended to a spiritual Empire, claim'd, as well they might, a divine Right to judge of the Extent of That Empire, and to do all they judg'd necessary for its Support; and consequently, that they had a Right, since temporal Things must give Place to spiritual, to depose the Governors of the State, whenever they judg'd it necessary for the Safety of the Church. 'Tis from hence there have been so many Tumults, Seditions, Insurrections, Rebellions, Civil Wars, Murders and Massacres upon the Pretence of Religion; and which at last ended in the Inslaving of the Christian World to the *Pope*, as Head of the Church; whose Power of deposing heretical Princes, was for many Ages universally allow'd; *no Nation, no University declaring against it; nor so much as one Divine, Civilian, or Casuist.* Nor were Things mended, when, by Reason of the great Schisms about the *Popedom*, Councils pretended to govern the Church: They then carry'd their Power to such a Height, as dispos'd Princes to enter into Agreements with the *Popes*, to whom they yielded a great deal, to be protected in what they had reserv'd to themselves. They, therefore, who maintain, that People may forfeit their Properties by *Schism, Heresy, Infidelity, &c.* play the Hypocrites, when they pretend the Power of Princes is more sacred than the Properties of the People, for whose sake they have all their Power: And, therefore, we may justly conclude, that they, who are for soliciting Kings, and Magistrates to assist the Church in punishing Misbelievers, are equally Enemies to the Power of Kings, as well as to the Rights of the People; and they have never fail'd to shew it, whenever they have found it their Interest.

Burnet's Exp. of the Art. 19. p. 187. lb. Art. 21. p. 200. lb. Art. 37. p. 385.

AND tho' at first those Princes were idoliz'd, who were the Instruments of their Cruelty ; yet when by their Means, the People were intirely at the Devotion of the Clergy, they too were soon forc'd to submit ; and had just Cause to curse their own, and Predecessors Bigotry, which enabl'd the *Ecclesiasticks* to insult them as they pleas'd. And what Disturbances have not your *Beckets*, *Lauds*, &c. created here, when they got into Power, and became then as insolent, as before they were submissive. Father *Paul*, no Stranger to our Constitution, in one of his Letters writ in the Reign of King *James I.* says thus ; “ As for the *English*, I am in Fear ; the great Power
 Eng. Transl. Pref. p. 51. “ the Bishops have, tho' under a King, makes me very jealous ; for should they have an easy Prince, or an Archbishop of an high Spirit, the Kingly Power must sink by
 “ the Bishops aspiring to an absolute Dominion.

I believe you will allow, that in the late Times, Men were as much in earnest about Religion as ever ; and yet by their mixing several Things, not of a moral Nature with it, and thinking all Means proper to promote them lawful, Imposture and Zeal, Bigotry and Hypocrisy, were strangely blended together. And as we are assur'd by an eminent Historian, it was the Opinion of *Cromwell*, that “ the Moral Laws were only binding in ordinary Cases ; but that
 Ep. Burnet's Sum. of Affairs before the Restoration p. 46. 79. “ upon extraordinary ones these might be superseded ; he,
 “ and that Set of Men, justifying their ill Actions from the
 “ Practice of *Ehud* and *Jael*, *Samson* and *David*.

HERE, indeed, they were no Hypocrites ; but frankly confess'd what at the Bottom influences all those, who, tho' they have not the Grace to own it, make Things, not of a moral Nature, necessary Ingredients of Religion ; and thereby give too just Occasion for this Remark of Archbishop

bishop Tillotson's, "That it will be hard to determine, how
 "many Degrees of Innocence and good Nature, or of Cold-
 "ness and Indifference in Religion, are necessary to over-
 "balance the Fury of a blind Zeal; since several Zealots
 "had been excellent Men, if their Religion had not hin-
 "der'd them; if the Doctrines and Principles of their
 "Church had not spoil'd their natural Disposition." What
 "can be a greater Satyr on any Religion, than that it is able
 "to spoil the best Disposition; and that, if it does not make
 "Men arrant Devils, 'tis only because Nature is too hard for
 "Principles?"

Serm. Vol. 3.
 p. 26, 27. &
 To. 1. p. 208.
 209.—

B. THESE sure are uncommon Principles.

A. NOT so uncommon, as you may imagine, since all
 Religion inclines Men to imitate what they worship; and
 they who believe that God will damn Men for Things
not Moral, must believe, that in Order to prevent damnable
 Opinions from spreading, and to shew themselves holy, as
 their heavenly Father is holy, they can't shew too much
 Enmity to those, against whom God declares an eternal En-
 mity; or plague them enough in this Life, upon whom in
 the Life to come God will pour down the Plagues of eter-
 nal Vengeance. Hence it is, that Animosity, Enmity, and Ha-
 tred, has over-run the Christian World; and Men, for the
 sake of these Notions, have exercis'd the utmost Cruelties on
 one another; the most *curfing* and *damning* Churches having
 always prov'd the most *persecuting*: The *Papists*, tho' they
 declare it to be their Duty to love their own Enemies, yet look-
 ing on all *Protestants* as God's Enemies, think it meritorious
 to murder them; and *Protestants* had no sooner renounc'd those
 persecuting Principles of *Popery*, but they too shamefully
 practis'd the same themselves, for the Support of such trifling
 Notions, as the Publick had not the least Interest in. And

before the happy Revolution, the Spirit of Persecution was so outrageous, that *Protestants* ruin'd *Protestants* upon the Account of Rites, Ceremonies, Habits, &c. to the great Joy of the common Enemy. And,

Tho' there may be, even now, some, who will not forgive their being debarr'd the Exercise of their former Tyranny, and wou'd be glad, at any Rate, to destroy that hated Liberty we are now blest with; yet, I may venture to say, that All, who have so just an Opinion of Religion, as to think it requires nothing but what is for the Good of Mankind, are to a Man zealous for the present Government establish'd on the Principles of Civil and Religious Liberty.

To preserve which, the Legislator has not only excluded all *Papists*, as Men of persecuting Principles from the Crown; but, by affording Protection to *Dissenters*, has set the differing Churches in *South* and *North-Britain* on a Level; well knowing, that neither Civil nor Ecclesiastical Liberty can be preserv'd on any other Foot. Had they gone a Step further, and excluded on the strictest Tests, Men of persecuting Principles from inferior Posts, as well as the persecuting *Papists* from the highest; they had acted up to those Principles of *Protestantism* upon which the Revolution is founded. And all, who are in earnest about Religion, wou'd have been highly pleas'd to have seen it an establish'd Maxim, that *no Man ought to suffer in his Person, his Property, or Reputation, for his Opinion in Matters of meer Religion.*

THEY, who think Force lawful for the Support of such Opinions as can't be supported by Reason, (as what Church, when it has Power, does not;) can't but think Fraud so too; especially when 'tis us'd not only for Mens eternal but

tem-

temporal Good, and to prevent such Severites, as otherwise would be thought *wholsome* and necessary. How can Men of these Principles think any Untruth not lawful, when 'tis necessary to guard fundamental Truths? Nay, must they not think it much more their Duty to deceive Men, for the sake of their eternal Good, than to deceive Children or sick People for an infinitely less Good; especially when the temporal Interest of the Deceivers is join'd with the spiritual Interest of the deceiv'd; who, happy Men, have the good Luck to be cheated into Paradise; and by the Stratagem of a pious Fraud to obtain an heavenly Crown? If it be lawful to deceive melancholy Persons, who design to poison themselves, and put a Remedy in the Place of the Poison; can any think such an Artifice unlawful, when he believes 'tis to hinder Millions from imbibing such Notions, as are rank Poison to their immortal Souls?

'Tis with an ill Grace that those *Protestants*, who are for restraining the Liberty of the Press, or suffering nothing to be printed, but what has undergone their Sponges, rail at the *Papists* for their *Index Expurgatorius*: These Men may, indeed, plead Authority; since as *Daille* observes, " This Opinion has always been in the World; that De usu Pa-
trum L. 1.
c. 3. " to settle a certain and assur'd Estimation upon that " which is good and true, (that is to say, upon what we ac- " count to be such;) it is necessary to remove out of the " Way whatsoever may be an Hindrance to it: Neither " ought we to wonder, that even those of the honest, in- " nocent, primitive Times made use of these Deceits, see- " ing for a good End they made no Scruple to forge whole " Books.

THEY, indeed, (and such there are, to the Honour of the present Time, not a few;) who think Sincerity will carry Men

to Heaven, lie under no Temptation to use pious Frauds; but for Men of other Principles, tho' they go under the Name of Fathers and Saints, there's no depending on them; since a Desire to deceive People into their Opinions, will hold in Proportion to the Zeal they have for propagating those Opinions.

If those Men, in whose Hands the sacred Books from Time to Time have been chiefly deposited, did allow that every Man was to judge for himself of their Meaning, in Order to make him acceptable to God; there could be no Danger of their being designedly corrupted: But if they believ'd, that a certain Set of Opinions was necessary to Salvation, then they must have thought themselves in Charity oblig'd, to take the most proper Methods to bring Men to embrace them; and consequently, must have believ'd it their Duty to substitute some Words of their own, which would best express those Opinions, on which Mens Salvation depended, in the Room of others, which were apt to lead them into fatal Errors; since by thus changing of Sounds, they might save Millions of Souls; who, they were confident, wou'd otherwise everlastingly perish. Must not the same Principle, that oblig'd them to impose their own Words, instead of the Words of God, in their *Creeds* and *Articles* on Pain of Damnation, equally oblige them to act the same Part in relation to the Scripture? And if Men have stuck so close to this Principle, that they have, (wherever they had a convenient Opportunity) left out, added to, or altered all other Books of Religion whatever, which have fallen into their Hands; there can be no Reason to think, they would not do the same with the Bible, where the Motives were so much stronger. " 'Tis no Wonder, " says that primitive Father, *Dionysius*, Bishop of *Corinth*, that
some

Euseb. Eccl. Hist.
l. 4. c. 23. in
anc.

“ some attempt to adulterate the holy Writings of our Lord; “ since they have basely falsify’d such as are of an inferior “ Authority:” And it must be either to put a Stop to, or prevent this Practice, that the *Revelation* concludes with a Curse on all who should make any Alteration in that Book. And ’tis morally impossible, but that they, who thought it their Duty to commit the most barbarous Acts of Cruelty for propagating of Opinions, shou’d not think it lawful to use Deceit for the same End: Which they can never imagine to be an Evil, while they suppose it so useful for the saving of Mens Souls, without giving up all the other indirect Methods, they took to hinder Men from seeing what may be said for, or against any Opinions.

NOR is there any one Thing in which all Parties agree, but in taking it for granted, that their Adversaries will scruple no Means to gain Credit to their own Opinions, or to discredit those of their Adversaries; and in Order to it, misrepresent their Persons as well as Opinions, and make Men Saints or Devils, as it serves their Cause; which, as you will find in Church-History, had afforded a Number of Miracles for the *Orthodox*, and as many Judgments on the *Heterodox*: And if there be Miracles on both Sides, ours to be sure are divine, and yours diabolical.

If ever the Words of *David*, that *All Men are Liars*, were literally true, it has been in this Case; and all History shews the Justness of my Lord *Bacon*’s Remark: *Maxime* Nov. Org. 12] *habenda sunt pro suspectis, quæ pendent quomodocunque a Religionis; ut Prodigia Livii.* Aph. 29.]

THE *Arabian* Writers are full of Miracles done by *Mahomet*, which they impose on People, by telling them, that “ *Mahomet*’s Enemies would not invent them; and “ his Friends are forbid telling Lies of him on Pain of “ *Damnation.*” *Mahom. Life in Eng. before Reland’s Mahom. p 32.*

B. You

B. You may make as bold as you will with *Mahometans*; but can you charge Protestant Writers, much less the holy Fathers, with any such Practices?

Pref.

A. I hope, 'tis no Crime to take Notice, that one of the ten *Reasons* the celebrated *Chillingworth* gives for his turning *Papist*, is, "Because the Protestant Cause is now, and" and hath been from the Beginning, maintain'd with gross "Falsifications and Calumnies, whereof the prime Controversy-Writers are notoriously, and in a high Degree, guilty." And upon his Return to the Church, he says, *Iliacos intra muros peccatur & extra*; which is in plain English, *Priests of all Denominations will lie alike*. And I may add, that it is so fully prov'd in the *Historical Essay of the Thirty nine Articles*, that, that Clause in the twentieth Article, that *the Church has Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, and Authority in Controversies of Faith*, had neither the Sanction of Parliament or Convocation; that no One has offer'd the least Reply, tho' for the Honour of those good Church-men who first forg'd it, and those who since defended it, we might expect all that could be said, tho' the Clause had not given them a Power which can only belong to Parliaments, of *decreeing Rites and Ceremonies*; and another Power, which can belong to no Mortal, *Authority in Controversies of Faith*. What Credit ought to be given to the Representations of modern Di-

See a Pamphlet in two Parts, entitul'd, *The Nation vindicated from the Aspersions cast on it in that Representation*.

vines, we may, in some Measure, learn from a Pamphlet entitul'd, *The Representation of the present State of Religion; with Regard to the late excessive Growth of Infidelity, Heresy and Profaneness, as it pass'd the lower House of Convocation*; where there are almost as many notorious Falshoods, as there are Paragraphs; not to say any thing of a certain *Pastoral Letter*. And if we look into Church-Story, we shall find it to have been the constant Practice of a certain Set of Men, not only to impute to their

their Adversaries Opinions which they disown'd, but to represent those Opinions as ready to prevail, was it not for their Interposition: By which Means they hop'd not only to be highly reverenc'd for their great Zeal, but to have new Powers granted them to oppress Mankind. Thus the Consequence of belying the Followers of *Wickliff*, was the Statute *de Hæretico comburendo*, granted at the Petition of the Clergy; and the belying the *Albigenses*, *Waldenses*, &c. rais'd a Crusado against those poor People.

As for the holy Fathers, They, as *Daillé* has a whole Chapter to prove, did not think themselves in their Controversial Writings (and most of theirs were such) oblig'd to speak the Truth; but that every Thing was lawful which serv'd to gain the Victory. They thought they might, by Way of Oeconomy or Dispensation, say one thing and mean the contrary: "*Origen, Methodius, Eusebius, Apollinaris*, l. 1. c. 6. See p. 159. &c. *to. 2. p. 105,* (says, St. *Jerome*) have writ largely against *Celsus* and *Porphyry*; Do but observe, says he, the Manner of their Arguing, and what slippery Problems they us'd. They alledg'd against the *Gentiles*, not what they believ'd, but what they thought necessary; *Non quod sentiunt, sed quod necesse est, dicunt*. And adds, I forbear mentioning the Latin-Writers, as *Tertullian, Cyprian, Minutius, Victorinus, Lactantius*, and *Hilary*; lest I should seem rather to accuse others, than defend myself:" And yet he goes on charging, not only St. *Paul*, but even *Jesus Christ* himself with the same Practice. And there was nothing so sacred that cou'd escape being chang'd, either in whole or in part; even the Canons of the famous Council of *Nice*, as well as the Canons of other Councils, have been falsify'd; and those forg'd Canons of *Nice* the Popes for many Ages impos'd on the *Christian World* as genuine;

genuine; and the antient *Liturgies*, tho' Things of daily Use, underwent divers Alterations: Nay, even the *Creeds* themselves, tho' thought to be the sacred *Depositum* of the Faith, have had the same Fate. " 'Tis well known, says an eminent Divine, " that the *Apostles Creed* has receiv'd various Additions to the original Form; That the *Nicene Creed* was enlarg'd by the *Constantinopolitan Fathers*, " and has also, with respect to the *Filioque*, been interpolated " by the *Latin Church*; that 'tis probable, the *Latin Church* " has interpolated the *Athanasian Creed* too, with Respect to " the *Filioque*; nay, the *Athanasian Creed* itself, as Bishop Burnet has shown, was a Forgery of the eighth Century: Nor did they confine their Forgeries to Church Matters, but practis'd on the imperial Laws, and inserted in the *Theodosian Code*, a Rescript of *Constantine*, relating to the Power of Bishops, long before repeal'd.

THE further back we go, the greater was their Recourse to pious Frauds. *Scaliger* speaking of the primitive Christians, says, *Omnia, quæ putabant Christianismo conducere, bibliis interseruerunt*. And as he supposes, nothing certain of the Church till the Times of *Pliny*, so he says, speaking of the second Century, *Adeo verbum Dei inefficax esse censuerunt, ut regnum Christi sine mendacio — promoveri posse diffiderunt, ut qui utinam illi primi mentiri cœpissent*. And *Casaubon* says, *Illud me vehementer movit, quod videam primis Ecclesiæ temporibus quam plurimos extitisse, qui facinus Palmarium judicabant, cœlestem veritatem figmentis suis ire adjutum; quo facilius nova illa doctrina Gentium sapientibus*

admitteretur. And the learned *Blondel* says, " That the second Century of Christianity, whether you consider the immoderate Impudence of Impostors, or the deplorable Credulity of Believers, was the most miserable Time, and " exceeded

“ exceeded all others in holy Cheats ; and that, to the Dis-
 “ grace of Christianity, there was a greater Aversion to Ly-
 “ ing, more Fidelity, and a greater Simplicity not to de-
 “ part from the Truth, to be found in profane Authors,
 “ than the Christian Writers.

OUR most learned Bishop *Stillingfleet*, says, “ That An-^{Irre. p. 296.}
 “ tiquity is most defective where it is most useful ; namely,
 “ in the Times immediately after the Apostles : And that
 “ the Fathers were often deceiv’d with pious Frauds ; but Orig. ^{Sacr.}
 “ then it was when they made for the Christians.” And ^{P. 29.}
 the pious Bishop *Fell* does not speak quite so tenderly in
 saying, *Tanta fuit primis seculis fingendi licentia, tam prona* ^{In præmissa}
in credendo facilitas, ut rerum gestarum fides exinde gra- ^{monit. Con-}
viter laboraverit ; nec orbis tantum terrarum, sed & dei Ec- ^{fess. Suppos.}
clesia de temporibus suis mysticis merito queratur. ^{Cyprian. p. 53.}

How unhappy were we of the Laity, had we not the
 Reason and Nature of Things (which no Priests can alter)
 to depend on ; but were intirely oblig’d to take our re-
 ligious Sentiments from Men, who as far as we have any
 Account of Things, have, even from the earliest Times, not
 scrupl’d to forge, not only whole Passages, but whole Books,
 and left nothing entire on which they cou’d lay their foul
 Hands : Which, as that great and honest Critick *Daille* ob-
 serves, “ has render’d the Writings and venerable Monu-^{Deus Petrum}
 “ ments of Antiquity so imbroil’d, and perplex’d, that it ^{C. 4. in fine}
 “ will be the hardest Matter in the World for any Man to
 “ make out any clear or perfect Discovery of those Things,
 “ which so many several Artists have endeavour’d to con-
 “ ceal from us.” As to this imposing Temper of the Eccle-
 siasticks, I shall only say, that it is plain from History, that
 the ambitious, domineering Part of the Clergy, the Impos-
 ers of *Creeds, Canons* and *Constitutions*, have prov’d the

common Plagues of Mankind; and the true Authors and Fomenters of the most general and most fatal Calamities, which have befallen the Christian World. What the Consequence was of imposing *Creeds*, may be learnt from an eminent Father, who flourish'd when this Trade of *Creed-*

Hil. ad Con-

stant. p. 217.

Basil Edit. al,

p. 211, 212-

making was at its Height. "It it, says St. Hilary, a Thing equally deplorable and dangerous, that there are at present as many *Creeds*, as there are Opinions among Men. — We make *Creeds* arbitrarily, and explain them as arbitrarily. — We can't be ignorant, that since the Council of *Nice*," (there it seems the fatal Mischief began) "we have done nothing but made *Creeds*. — We make *Creeds* every Year, nay, every Moon; we repent of what we have done; we defend those that repent; we anathematize those we have defended; we condemn the Doctrine of others in ourselves, or our own in that of others; and reciprocally tearing one another in Pieces, we have been the Cause of one another's Ruin.

Thus you see, how Fraud and Force are unavoidable, when 'tis believ'd Things, having no Foundation in Nature or Reason, are necessary Parts of Religion; and Ecclesiastical History contains a continued Scene of Villany, for the Support of such Notions: And that the more good Sense, Piety, and Virtue any Man was endow'd with, the more, if he did not come into those Notions, was he hated and persecuted as a most dangerous Enemy. But,

BEFORE I leave this melancholy Subject, I must observe, these Men have done their best to justify a Remark of *Uriel*

P. 351. sub

finem Amic.

Collat. Lim-

borch,

Acofta, who, in his *Exemplar vitæ humanæ*, says, "That when Men depart ever so little from Natural Religion, it is the Occasion of great Strifes and Divisions; but if they recede much

“ much from it, who can declare the Calamities which ensue ? ” And can Men more depart from it, than by imposing on their Brethren, either by Fraud, or Force, Things no Ways tending to the Good of Mankind ?

THO’ we cry up the great Advantage we have above all other Animals, in being capable of Religion, yet those Animals, we despise for Want of it, herd most socially together ; except such carnivorous Creatures which Necessity separates. The *Ants*, notwithstanding they have Stings, are crouded in vast Numbers in the same Hillock ; and, having all Things in common, seem to have no other Contention among them, but who shall be most active in carrying on the common Interest of their small Republick. And much the same may be said of *Bees*, and other Animals ; yet Men, tho’ they can’t subsist but in Society, and have Hands, Speech, and Reason to qualify them for the Blessing of it above all other Animals ; nay, what is more, have Religion, design’d to unite them in the firm Bonds of Love and Friendship, and to engage them to vie with one another in all good Offices ; and the good natur’d Laity too have, at a vast Expence, hir’d Persons to inculcate these generous Notions ; yet alas ! in spite of all these Helps and Motives, Religion has been made by these very Persons, a Pretence to render Men unsociable, fierce, and cruel ; and to act every Thing destructive to their common Welfare : And the greater the Number of these religious, and the more Expence People have been at in maintaining them, the more of these Mischiefs have they most ungratefully occasion’d to their generous Benefactors.

B. GRANTING that a Deluge of every Thing that’s ill has overflow’d *Christianity*, and does so still in most Places ; and that Religion has been made a Handle for such Barbarities,

ties, as human Nature, left to itself, wou'd startle at ; yet how is this to be remedy'd ?

A. EDUCATION is justly esteem'd a second Nature, and its Force so strong, that few can wholly shake off its Prejudices, even in Things unreasonable and unnatural ; and must it not have the greatest Efficacy in Things agreeable to Reason, and suitable to humane Nature ? Let those, therefore, who have the Education of Youth, recommend Morality as the End of all Religion ; and let every Thing not tending to promote the Honour of God and the Good of Man, be accounted Superstition ; let the Youth be taught to join the Ideas of Virtue with the Ideas of Beauty, Pleasure, and Happiness ; and the Ideas of Vice with those of Deformity, Grief, and Misery ; there wou'd then be little Room for so odious a Thing as Vice to take Possession of Peoples Minds, and justle out Virtue so firmly rooted. For these Ideas thus early associated, wou'd by Degrees become inseparable ; especially if Men, as they grew up, were frequently shewn the necessary Connexion between these Ideas ; and how essential Virtue is to the Felicity of Nations, Families, and private Persons ; and on the contrary, how miserable Vice must render Men in every Station of Life.

'TWAS after this Manner, that the Heroes of Old, those Benefactors to Mankind, were educated ; and the Discourses of the Philosophers, who had the instructing them, were full of the intrinsic Loveliness of Vertue, and Deformity of Vice ; and taught them to direct all their Actions to the common Good, as to a common Centre ; and that their future as well as present Happiness depended on it : But afterwards the Education of the Youth being committed to Men of another Stamp, devoted to the Interest of their own Order ; they, instead of infusing these noble Sentiments into them,

them, persuaded them that their seperate Interest, with the Things on which it depended, which they call'd *The Good of the Church*, was to be their chief Aim ; and so little Regard have some Men had to the common Good, that they have industriously dress'd up Vice in such lovely, and Virtue in such odious Colours, as to maintain, that bating the Consequences of a future State, they wou'd act like Fools, who did not indulge themselves in a vicious Course. And I believe, Men of such Principles can't boast of much more Virtue, than a late Prelate of uncommon Parts and Learning, who from the Pulpit endeavour'd to prove, that *In this Life the virtuous Man is most miserable* ; and who, by all his Actions, especially, by his late monstrous Practices, shew'd how firmly he believ'd his own Doctrine ; and how resolv'd he was, that Virtue shou'd not make his present Life miserable.

*Atterbury's
Fun. Sermon
on Mr Bennet.*

B. I grant you, 'tis of the utmost Consequence to the Common-wealth, that Youth shou'd be rightly instructed in all such Principles as promote the common Good ; but can you imagine Pagan Philosophers cou'd infuse more generous Sentiments into them, than Christian Clergy-men ?

A. I do not think so, when they are such Clergy-men as those who at present have the instructing our Youth ; otherwise I can't help giving into the Sentiments of a noble Author, who, speaking of the Education of Youth, when instructed by Philosophers, says, " It tended to make them as useful
" to the Society they liv'd in as possible. There they were
" train'd up to Exercise and Labour, to accustom themselves
" to an active Life ; no Vice was more infamous than Sloth,
" nor any Man more contemptible, than he who was too
" lazy to do all the Good he could. The Lectures of their
" Philosophers serv'd to quicken them up to This ; they re-
" commended above all Things the Duty to their Country,
the

*Preface to the
Account of
Denmark*

“ the Preservation of the Laws and publick Liberty ; sub-
 “ servient to which they preach’d up moral Virtues, such as
 “ Fortitude, Temperance, Justice, a Contempt of Death,
 “ &c. They taught their Youth how, and when to speak
 “ pertinently ; how to act like Men, to subdue their Pas-
 “ sions, to be publick-spirited ; to despise Death, Torments
 “ and Reproach, Riches, and the Smiles of Princes as well
 “ as their Frowns, if they stood between them and their
 “ Duty. This Manner of Education produc’d Men of ano-
 “ ther Stamp than appears now upon the Theatre of the
 “ World, such as we are scarce worthy to mention, and
 “ must never think to imitate, till the like Manner of Insti-
 “ tution grows again into Reputation : Which in enslav’d
 “ Countries ’tis never like to do, as long as the Ecclesiasticks,
 “ who have an opposite Interest, keep not only the Education
 “ of Youth, but the Consciences of old Men in their Hands.

B. THIS, I confess, is the right Way to prevent Immo-
 rality ; but if every Thing, as you contend, ought to be
 look’d on as superstitious which is not of a moral Nature,
 Superstition has spread itself over the Face of the Earth,
 and prevail’d more or less in all Times and Places.

A. THIS is no more than what has been own’d long
 Cicero l. 2. de ago by a very good Judge, who says, *Superstitio fusa per-*
 Divinat. c 72. *gentes, oppressit omnium ferè Animos, atque hominum occupa-*
vit Imbecillitatem. And the Universality of Superstition is in
 Effect own’d by every Sect, in affirming that Superstition is
 crept into all other Sects ; and that ’tis the chief Business of
 their respective Teachers to promote it : And is it possible
 to be otherwise, as long as Men are taught to build their
 Religion on a narrower Foundation, than that on which the
 universal Being has universally laid it ?

’TIS

'Tis the Observation of *Naturalists*, that there is no Species of Creatures, but what have some innate Weakness, which makes them an easy Prey to other Animals, that know how to make the Advantage of it: Now the peculiar Foible of Mankind is Superstition, which at all Times has made them liable to be practis'd on, not by Creatures of different Species, but by those of their Own; who, by a confident Pretence of knowing more than their Neighbours, have first circumvented the many, the credulous and unwary; and afterwards forc'd the Free-thinking few into an outward Compliance: And as far as we have an Account of Things, we shall find that most of the prevailing Superstitions have been erected on this Foundation, and to it owe their whole Support. And whoever knows any Thing of *France* and *Italy*, not to mention other Countries, can't but know that the better Sort are sensible of the prevailing Absurdities; but, over-aw'd by the Priests and Mob, are forc'd to submit. And,

THE more Superstition the People have, the easier they may be impos'd on by designing Ecclesiasticks; and the less Religion the Clergy have, the more unanimous they will be in carrying on their common Interest; and when the Clergy are without Religion, and the People abound in Superstition, the Church, you may be sure, is in a flourishing Condition; but in great Danger, when Men place their Religion in Morality: For then all indifferent Things are look'd on as they are in their own Nature, indifferent; then the People have no superstitious Veneration for the Persons of Men, and the Clergy are esteem'd only in Proportion to the Good they do; and every Evil they commit is reckon'd a Breach of Trust, they being maintain'd by the People chiefly to set them good Examples: But this Method of gaining all

Life of Baxter
c. 8. p. 175.
Calamy's A-
bridgment.

different Things on the severest Penalties; since their Priests claim the same Power, in making such Things necessary to the communicating in their holy Church; out of which, they affirm, Salvation is not to be had. I wish I cou'd say, the Popish Priests only were guilty of this horrid Impiety; and that some Others had not been as zealous for imposing such Things, by making them necessary Terms of Communion, and damning those that durst not comply with them; and who seem to be of the Spirit with the famous Bishop Gunning, who, when the Presbyterians urg'd that *Lights, Holy Water*, and such like, might as well be impos'd as the *Cross* and *Surplice*; reply'd, *The more the better*. But if *External Rites*, as Archbishop Tillotson observes, *have eat out the Heart of Religion in the Church of Rome*; by Parity of Reason, Religion should seem to have made the deepest Impression on the *Quakers*, who are the most averse to Things of this Nature; and are therefore hated by the *Formalists* of all Churches.

B. Sensible Things make a deeper Impression on the Minds of the common People than Words; and therefore, the using symbolical Representations being for the Advantage of Religion, why may they not be ordain'd of God?

A. If you must have Recourse to Words, to explain the Signification of such Symbols, are they not arbitrary Marks, whose Meaning cannot be known, but from Words; and, not being capable of expressing Things more fully than Words, wholly needless as to that Purpose? Nay, Words themselves being but arbitrary Signs, to multiply such Signs needlessly would be very absurd.

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As to sensible Things making a deeper Impression on the common People, That, I presume, is a just Reason against their Use in Religion ; because the Vulgar, who generally look no further than Externals, do not use them barely, as they do Words, to express their Meaning ; but conceive in them, I know not what internal Holiness ; and think such symbolical Representations as necessary as the Things represented by them ; nay, by Degrees, forgetting the Reason of their Institution, come to idolize them, as the *Israelites* did the brazen Serpent : And this the People have always done in all Religions whatever, where these symbolical Representations have been used.

THE chief Cause of the *Egyptians* falling into grosser Idolatries than other less knowing Nations, was, no Doubt, owing to the Use of *Hyeroglyphicks* in their religious Worship : An Ox, that laborious and useful Animal, was at first only a symbolical Representation ; the Meaning of which, the People in Time forgetting, fell to down-right adoring the Beast ; and, perhaps, it was for the same Reason that *Leeks* and *Onions*, and other Garden-stuff came likewise to be worshipped : But without looking into the *Pagan* World, and shewing by what Degrees they came to worship those sensible Representations, Statues and Images ; whoever reflects on the Use the *Papists* have made of such Things, must see how fatal it is to bring them into Religion : The Images and Pictures of Saints, and Crosses were first introduced, on Pretence, that being sensible Representations, they might serve to excite Peoples Devotion ; but that End was soon forgotten, and the superstitious Vulgar worshipp'd the very Images, Pictures, and Crosses : I need not tell you what *Transubstantiation*, *Consubstantiation*, *Real Presence*, and other Absurdities of that Nature are owing to ; and what Mischiefes they

they have occasion'd: But supposing such symbolical Representations might be occasionally used; is it not, for the Reasons already given, incumbent on the Parties concern'd, to appoint, alter, and vary them as Occasion requires?

B. If God has delegated to the Clergy a Power to consecrate Persons and Things; can any, whether Prince or People, dispense with this Power, and substitute Things unconsecrated?

A. As God alone is absolutely holy, so Men may be said to be more or less holy, according as they imitate him; and as this Holiness consists in a good and pious Disposition of Mind; so Mens Actions are no otherwise holy, but as they flow from, and are Signs of this holy Disposition. Inanimate Things can only be said to have a relative Holiness, as made Use of in Actions, by which Men express that holy Disposition of Mind; and can last no longer than they are thus employ'd. What Holiness, either real or relative, wou'd the Ark now have? tho' it once had such a legal Holiness, that more than fifty thousand
2 Sam. 6. 19. Reapers were destroy'd for peeping into it. Nay, Persons who want all real Holiness, may yet have a relative Holiness, as Ministers employ'd by the Congregation about holy Things; but this can be no more than a derivative Holiness, and can last no longer than the holy Action they are about; and belongs equally to those from whom 'tis deriv'd. Thus all the relative Holiness which concerns publick Worship, whether as to Persons, Places, or Things, must be deriv'd from the Congregation; and nothing sure, can be more absurd, than to imagine the Clergy, by any Form of Words, can bestow any permanent Holiness, whether real or relative, on Timber, Stone, &c. And therefore, the Method us'd by Archbishop
Laud

Laud, in consecrating of a Church, was generally cry'd out on as profane, and tending to justify those Consecrations us'd in the *Greek* and *Latin* Churches; whereby they cheat the People of immense Sums. But 'tis no Wonder, if they, who claim this Power in Relation to inanimate Things, shou'd pretend to convey to Men, tho' ever so wicked, a real inherent, nay, *indelible* holy Character; tho' wherein That consists, they themselves can't tell. But,

WHAT the Priests aim at, by this Cant, is to make People believe their Prayers are of greater Efficacy than Those of the unsanctify'd Laity; very well knowing, that if the People were so weak as to believe it, they wou'd be thought necessary on all Occasions; especially to Persons on their Death-beds. What Advantages they have made by being then thought thus necessary, none can be ignorant of. I do not wonder, that so loose an Haranguer as *St. Chrysostom* shou'd say, *The Prayers of the People, which are weak in themselves, laying hold on the more prevailing Prayers of the Priests, may, by them, be convey'd to Heaven.* But I admire, that the judicious Bishop *Potter*, the King's Of Church Government, p. 259 Professor of Divinity at *Oxford*, should maintain the same Position, and think to support it by this Father's Authority: But this is modest in Comparison of what *Hicks*, *Brett*, and Others of that Stamp, assign to Priests; in supposing they have such transcendent Privileges by Virtue of their *indelible* Character, that they can bless, or curse *authoritatively*; nay, that their very Prayers to God himself are *authoritative Prayers*.

B. THO' some have had too little Regard for Natural Religion, as being too stubborn to yield to any selfish Views; yet that will not justify you for levelling your
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Arguments against the divine Omnipotency. Are we not God's Creatures; and may not our Creator give us what arbitrary Commands he pleases?

A. NOT to repeat what I have said already, I shall only ask you, Why may not God deceive us? Tell us one Thing, and act the contrary? Is not his Power absolute? And *his Will, who can resist?* Would you not reply, that God as he is infinitely good and happy, can have no Motive to deceive us? And that he could do whatever he thought fit for the Good of his Creatures, without having Recourse to such mean Shifts? And will not this Reason equally hinder him from burthening us with arbitrary Commands? Is not one as much as the other, inconsistent with his Wisdom and Goodness, by which his Power is always directed? And of the Two, it shou'd seem less absurd, that God might deceive People for their Good, than impose arbitrary Things on them for their Hurt; by annexing severe Penalties on Non-observance.

B. MAY not God give us arbitrary Commands to try our Obedience?

A. A MAN, who knows not the Hearts of Others, nor foresees how they will act, may think it prudent to try People in Things of little, or no Moment, before he trusts them in greater; but God, who foreknows what Men will do on all Occasions, can need no such Trial. If earthly Kings, who may be deceiv'd, and for the most Part are so, wou'd be justly esteem'd Tyrants, if they require Things of their Subjects meerly to try their Obedience; how can we think This of the Omniscient, infinitely Glorious King of Kings? Tho' was a Trial necessary, moral and immoral Things wou'd be the most proper Subjects for it; because

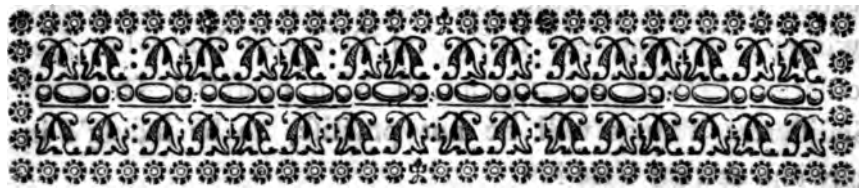
cause we can't practise one, or refrain from the other, without subduing our Lusts and Passions: But what speculative Articles will not an ill Man profess? Or what indifferent Things will he not practise, to be indulg'd in any one darling Vice?

AND now don't You think we may justly conclude, that whatsoever God requires of us to believe, or practise, is purely for our Good; and consequently, that no Belief, or Practice, which does not contribute to that Good, can come from God; and therefore, as long as we adhere to what Reason reveals to us concerning the Goodness of God, by admitting every Thing into Religion which makes for the Good of Man, and nothing that does not, we can't mistake our Duty either to God, or Man.

AND therefore, I shall conclude this Head with a Quotation from a noble Author, "To believe, that every Characterist.
" Thing is govern'd, order'd, or regulated *for the best*, by Vol. 2. p. 12.
" a designing Principle, or Mind, necessarily good and permanent, is to be a perfect THEIST.

" To believe no *one* supreme designing Principle, or Mind, but rather *two, three*, or more, (tho' in their Nature *good*) is to be a POLYTHEIST.

" To believe the governing Mind, or Minds, not absolutely and necessarily good, nor confin'd to what is best, but capable of acting according to meer Will or Fancy, is to be a DÆMONIST.



C H A P. XII.

That They, who, to magnify Revelation, weaken the Force of the Religion of Reason and Nature, strike at all Religion; and that there can't be Two Independent Rules for the Government of human Actions.

B.  **N** my Opinion, You lay too great Stress on fallible Reason, and too little on infallible Revelation: And, therefore, I must needs say, your Arguing wholly from Reason wou'd make some of less Candor than myself, take you for an arrant *Free-Thinker*.

A. **W**HATEVER is true by Reason, can never be false by Revelation; and if God can't be deceiv'd himself, or be willing to deceive Men, the Light he hath given to distinguish between religious Truth and Falshood, cannot, if duly attended to, deceive them in Things of so great Moment.

THEY, who do not allow Reason to judge in Matters of Opinion, or Speculation, are guilty of as great Absurdity as the *Papists*; who will not allow the Senses to be Judges

Judges in the Case of *Transubstantiation*, tho' a Matter directly under their Cognizance; nay, the Absurdity, I think, is greater in the first Case; because Reason is to judge, whether our Senses are deceiv'd: And if no Texts ought to be admitted as a Proof in a Matter contrary to Sense, they ought, certainly, as little to be admitted in any Point contrary to Reason.

IN a Word, to suppose any Thing in Revelation inconsistent with Reason, and, at the same Time, pretend it to be the Will of God, is not only to destroy that Proof, on which we conclude it to be the Will of God, but even the Proof of the Being of a God; since if our reasoning Faculties duly attended to can deceive us, we can't be sure of the Truth of any one Proposition; but every Thing wou'd be alike uncertain, and we shou'd for ever fluctuate in a State of universal Scepticism: Which shews how absurdly they act, who, on Pretence of magnifying Tradition, endeavour to weaken the Force of Reason; (tho' to be sure they always except their own;) and thereby foolishly sap the Foundation, to support the Superstructure; but as long as Reason is against Men, they will be against Reason. We must not, therefore, be surpris'd, to see some endeavour to reason Men out of their Reason; tho' the very Attempt to destroy Reason by Reason, is a Demonstration Men have nothing but Reason to trust to. And,

AND to suppose any Thing can be true by Revelation, which is false by Reason, is not to support that Thing, but to undermine Revelation; because nothing unreasonable, nay, what is not highly reasonable, can come from a God, of unlimited, universal, and eternal Reason: As evident as this Truth is, yet that shall not hinder me from

examining in a proper Place, whatever You can urge from Revelation. And give me Leave to add, that I shall not be surpris'd, if for so laudable an Attempt, as reconciling Reason and Revelation, which have been so long set at Variance, I shou'd be censur'd as a *Free-Thinker* ; a Title, that, however invidious it may seem, I am far from being ashamed of ; since One may as well suppose, a Man can reason without thinking at all, as reason well without thinking freely. But,

THE irreconcilable Enemies of Reason seeing it too gross, in this reasoning Age, to attack Reason openly, do it covertly under the Name of *Free-Thinking* ; not despairing, but that the Time may come again, when the Laity shall stifle every Thought rising in their Minds, tho' with ever so much Appearance of Truth, as a Suggestion of Satan, if it clashes with the real, or pretended Opinions of their Priests.

B. THO' You talk so much about Reason, You have not defin'd what You-mean by that Word.

A. WHEN we attribute any Operation to it, as distinguishing between Truth and Falshood, &c. we mean by it the rational Faculties ; but when we ascribe no such Operation to it, as when we give a *Reason* for a Thing, &c. we then understand by it, any Medium, by which our rational Faculties judge of the Agreement, or Disagreement of the Terms of any Proposition ; and if an Author writes intelligibly, we may easily discern in which of these two Senses he takes the Word. But to go to the Bottom of this Matter, . . .

It will be requisite to give a more distinct Account of *Reason* in both these Senses : By the rational Faculties then, we mean the natural Ability a Man has to
appre-

apprehend, judge, and infer: The *immediate Objects* of which Faculties are, not the Things themselves, but the *Ideas* the Mind conceives of them: While our *Ideas* remain single, they fall under the *Apprehension*, and are express'd by *simple Terms*; when join'd, under the *Judgment*, and express'd by *Propositions*; when so join'd as to need the *Intervention* of some other *Idea* to compare 'em with, in Order to form a *Judgment*, they become by that *Intervention*, the Subject of *Inference*, or *Argumentation*; and this is term'd, *Syllogism* or *Argument*. It must be observ'd too, that all the *Ideas* we have, or can have, are either by *Sensation* or *Reflection*; by the first, we have our *Ideas* of what passes, or exists without; by the second, of what passes, or exists within the Mind: And in the View, or Contemplation of these consists all our Knowledge; that being nothing but the *Perception of the Agreement, or Disagreement of our Ideas*; and any two of these, when join'd together, so as to be affirm'd or deny'd of each other, make what we call a *Proposition*; when consider'd apart, what we call the *Terms* of that *Proposition*; the *Agreement, or Disagreement* of which *Terms* being express'd by the rightly affirming, or denying 'em of each other, is what we call *Truth*; the Perception of their Agreement or Disagreement, is what we term *Knowledge*: This Knowledge accrues either immediately on the bare Intuition of these two *Ideas, or Terms* so join'd, and is therefore styl'd *Intuitive Knowledge*; or, self-evident *Truth*: Or by the Intervention of some other *Idea, or Ideas*, as a common Measure for the other two; and is therefore call'd the *Medium*, by which Reason judges of their Agreement, or Disagreement; and this is call'd *Demonstrative Knowledge*, which is never to be had without the Help of the other. For,

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IF there were not some Propositions which need not to be prov'd, it would be in vain for Men to argue with one another ; because they then could bring no Proofs but what needed to be prov'd. — Those Propositions which need no Proof, we call self-evident ; because by comparing the Ideas, signify'd by the Terms of such Propositions, we immediately discern their Agreement, or Disagreement: This is, as I said before, what we call intuitive Knowledge, and is the Knowledge of God himself, who sees all Things by Intuition ; and may, I think, be call'd *divine Inspiration*, as being immediately from God ; and not acquir'd by any human Deduction, or drawing of Consequences: This, certainly, is that divine, that uniform Light, which shines in the Minds of all Men, and enables them to discern whatever they do discern ; since without it there could be no Demonstration, no Knowledge, but invincible Obscurity, and universal Uncertainty.

WHERE a Proposition can't be made evident, by comparing the two Ideas, or Terms of it with each other, it is render'd so by intermediate Ideas or Terms ; whereby the Agreement, or Disagreement of the Ideas under Examination, or the Truth of that Proposition is perceiv'd ; and when there is an intuitive Perception of the Agreement, or Disagreement of the intermediate Ideas in each Step of the Progression, then, and not till then, it becomes demonstrative Knowledge ; otherwise it can rise no higher than Probability, which consists not in a certain, but a likely Connexion between the Terms of a Proposition, and the intermediate Proofs of it : So that every Proposition that's only probable, must have a proportionable Degree of Uncertainty, otherwise it would amount to Demonstration ; and consequently, Probability, as well as Certainty,

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is founded on the Relation it has to self-evident Truths; because where no Relation to them of *any Sort* can be discover'd, there is no Room for Certainty, or Probability.

HENCE we see that all wrong Reasoning is the Effect of Rashness; and consists either in taking Propositions to have a certain Connexion with self-evident Truths, when they have but a probable one; or imagining there's a probable Connexion, when there's no Connexion at all; or else mistaking the Degrees of Probability.

B. THE *Quakers* are very positive, that there is in all Mankind, a Principle of Action distinct from Reason, (and which is not Inspiration) by which all are to be govern'd in Matters of Religion, as they are by Reason in other Matters; and which they commonly call *the Light within*.

A. WAS there any such Principle, Men destitute of all Reason were as capable of knowing all Matters of Religion, as if they had been ever so rational. 'Tis strange, that all Mankind shou'd have a Principle of acting, of which they never were sensible; nor can these modern Discoverers tell them what it is, or how it operates; nor do they themselves ever use it in any of their Debates about Religion; but argue like other Men from Principles that are in common to all Mankind, and prove Propositions that are not self-evident by those that are so; and confute false and bad Reasons (of which they can only judge by Reason) by true and good Reasons; which supposes that Reason, however fallible it may be, is all rational Creatures have to trust to; and that 'tis the highest Commendation of Religion, that it is a *reasonable Service*. And since this is an Age, where Words without

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Meaning, or Distinctions without Difference, will not pass current; why shou'd they, who otherwise appear to have good Sense, thus impose on themselves, and be expos'd by others, for such senseless Notions, as can only serve to prejudice People against their other rational Principles? But 'tis the Fate of most Sects to be fondest of their ugliest Brats. But not to deviate,

WERE it not for those self-evident Notions, which are the Foundation of all our Reasonings, there could be no intellectual Communication between God and Man; nor, as we are fram'd, can God ascertain us of any Truth, but by shewing its Agreement with those self-evident Notions, which are the Tests by which we are to judge of every Thing, even the Being of a God and Natural Religion, which, tho' not knowable by Intuition, are to be demonstrated by such Proofs, which have, mediately or immediately, a necessary Connexion with our self-evident Notions. And therefore, to weaken the Force of Demonstration, is to strike at all Religion, and even the Being of God; and not to give Probability its due Weight, is to strike at the Authority of that Revelation You contend for; because, that God reveal'd his Will by *Visions, Dreams, Trances*, or any other Way besides the Light of Nature, can only come under the Head of Probability. And,

If it be but probable, that God made any external Revelation at all, it can be but probable, tho' perhaps, not in the same Degree of Probability, that he made this, or that Revelation: And this Evidence all pretend to, since, perhaps, there never was a Time or Place, where some external Revelation was not believ'd, and its Votaries equally confident, that Theirs was a True Revelation: And, indeed, the prodigious Numbers of Revelations, which from Time

to Time have been in the World, shew how easily Mankind may in this Point be impos'd on. And as there can be no Demonstration of the Revelation itself, so neither can there be any of its Conveyance to Posterity; much less that this, or that, has been convey'd entire to distant Times and Places; especially, if a Revelation be of any Bulk; and which may have gone thorow the Hands of Men, who not only in the dark Ages of the Church, but even in the Beginning, if we judge by the Number of corrupted Passages, and even forg'd Books, were capable of any pious Fraud. Nay, the very Nature of Probability is such, that were it only left to Time itself, even that wou'd wear it quite out; at least if it be true what *Mathematicians* pretend to demonstrate, viz. That the Probability of Facts depending on human Testimony, must gradually lessen in Proportion to the Distance of the Time when they were done. And we have a Reverend Divine, who has publish'd, as he thinks, a Demonstration of This, with Relation to Facts recorded in Scripture; and has gone so far, as to fix the precise Time, when all Probability of the Truth of the History of Christ, will be entirely spent, and exhausted.

Craig's Principia Mathematica Theologiae Christianae. p. 23— &c. d. Edit. Londini 1699.

ARCHBISHOP *Laud* says, that “ the Assent we yield “ to this main Point of Divinity, that the Scripture is “ the Word of God, is grounded on no compelling or “ demonstrative Ratiocination, but relies on the Strength “ of Faith more than any one Principle whatever.” And by the Confession of the best *Protestant* Writers, the internal Excellency of the Christian Doctrines is the main Proof of their coming from God; and therefore, Mr. *Chillingworth* says, “ For my Part, I profess, if the Doctrine of the Scripture was not as good, and as fit to come “ from God, the Fountain of Goodness, as the Miracles, by

Laud against Fisher. p. 110.

Relig. Protest. Part 1. c. 2. p. 53.

“ which it was confirm’d, were great, I should want one
 “ main Pillar of my Faith; and for want of it, I fear,
 “ should be much stagger’d in it.

THIS, I think, may be sufficient to shew, what a Folly they are guilty of, who, in Order to advance the Credit of Revelation, endeavour to weaken the Force of Reason.

B. I don’t think, we ought to have the same Regard for Reason, as Men had formerly; when That was the sole Rule God had given them for the Government of their Actions; since now we Christians have two supreme, independant Rules, *Reason* and *Revelation*; and both require an absolute Obedience.

A. I can’t see how that is possible; for if you are to be govern’d by the latter, That supposes you must take every Thing on Trust; or meerly because it’s said by those, for whose Dictates You are to have an implicit Faith: For to examine into the Truth of what they say, is renouncing their Authority; as on the contrary, if Men are to be govern’d by their Reason, they are not to admit any Thing further than as they see it reasonable. To suppose both consistent, is to suppose it consistent to take, and not to take, Things on Trust.

To receive Religion on the Account of Authority supposes, that if the same Authority promulgated a different Religion, we shou’d be oblig’d to receive it; and indeed, it’s an odd Jumble, to prove the Truth of a Book by the Truth of the Doctrines it contains, and at the same Time conclude those Doctrines to be true, because contain’d in that Book; and yet this is a Jumble every One makes, who contends for Mens being absolutely govern’d both by Reason and Authority.

WHAT

WHAT can be a fuller Evidence of the Sovereignty of Reason, than that all Men, when there is any Thing in their traditional Religion, which in its literal Sense can't be defended by Reason, have Recourse to any Method of Interpretation, tho' ever so forc'd, in Order to make it appear reasonable. And do not all Parties, when press'd, as they are all in their Turns, say with *Tertulian*, " We ought to interpret Scripture, not by the Sound of Words, but by the Nature of Things." *Malo te ad-* Adv. Prae.
sensum rei, quam ad sonum vocabuli exerceas. But some- Co. 3.
times the Letter of the Scripture is such an Authority, as can't be parted with without Sacrilege; and sometimes 'tis a Letter which killeth.

IN a Word, when Men, in defending their own, or attacking other traditionary Religions, have Recourse to the Nature or Reason of Things; does not That shew, they believe the Truth of all traditionary Religions is to be try'd by it; as being That, which must tell them what is true or false in Religion? And were there not some Truths relating to Religion of themselves so evident, as that all must agree in them, nothing relating to Religion cou'd be prov'd, every Thing wou'd want a further Proof; and if there are such evident Truths, must not all others be try'd by their Agreement with them? And are not these the Tests, by which we are to distinguish the only True Religion from the many false Ones? And do not all Parties alike own, there are such Tests drawn from the Nature of Things, each crying their Religion contains every Thing worthy, and nothing unworthy of having God for its Author; thereby confessing, that Reason enables them to tell what is worthy of having God for its Author. And if Reason tells them this,

does it not tell them every Thing that God can be suppos'd to require ?

IN short, nothing can be more certain, than that there are some Things in their own Nature good, some evil; and others neither good nor evil; and for the same Reason God commands the Good, and forbids the Evil, he leaves Men at Liberty in Things indifferent; it being inconsistent with his Wisdom to reward the Observance of such Things; and with his Goodness to punish for not observing them. And as he cou'd have no End in creating Mankind, but their common Good; so they answer the End of their Creation, who do all the Good they can; and to enable Men to do do This, God has given them Reason to distinguish Good from Evil, useful from useless Things: Or in other Words, has made them moral Agents, capable of discerning the Relations they stand in to God and one another; and the Duties resulting from these Relations, so necessary to their common Good: And consequently, Religion, thus founded on these immutable Relations, must at all Times, and in all Places, be alike immutable; since external Revelation, not being able to make any Change in these Relations, and the Duties that necessarily result from them, can only recommend, and inculcate these Duties; except we suppose, that God at last acted the Tyrant, and impos'd such Commands, as the Relations we stand in to him, and one another, no Ways require.

To imagine any external Revelation not to depend on the Reason of Things, is to make Things give Place to Words; and implies, that from the Time this Rule commenc'd, we were forbid to act as moral Agents, in judging what is good; or evil; fit, or unfit; and that we are to make no other Use
of

of our Reason, than to see what is the literal Meaning of Texts ; and to admit That only to be the Will of God, tho' ever so inconsistent with the Light of Nature, and the eternal Reason of Things. Is not this to infer, there's nothing good or evil in itself, but that all depends on the Will of an arbitrary Being ; which, tho' it may change every Moment, is to be unalterably found in such a Book ? And,

ALL Divines, I think, now agree in owning, that there's a Law of Reason, antecedent to any external Revelation, that God can't dispense, either with his Creatures or himself, for not observing ; and that no external Revelation can be true, that in the least Circumstance, or minutest Point, is inconsistent with it. If so, how can we affirm any one Thing in Revelation to be true, till we perceive, by that Understanding, which God has given us to discern the Truth of Things ; whether it agrees with this immutable Law, or not ?

If we can't believe otherwise than as Things appear to our Understandings, to suppose God requires us to give up our Understandings (a Matter we can't know but by using our Understanding) to any Authority whatever, is to suppose he requires Impossibilities. And our self-evident Notions being the Foundation of all Certainty, we can only judge of Things, as they are found to be more or less agreeable to them ; to deny This on any Pretence whatever, can serve only to introduce an universal Scepticism. And therefore Bishop *Taylor* very justly observes, " 'Tis Reason that is Polem. Disci
" the Judge ; and Fathers, Councils, Tradition, and Scrip-P. 507.
" ture the Evidence." And if Reason be the Judge, can it form a right Judgment, without examining into every Thing which offers itself for Evidence ? And wou'd it not
exa-

examine in vain, if it had not certain Tests, by which it cou'd try all Evidences relating to religious Matters.

B. Tho' Reason may be the Judge; yet the Scripture, we say, is the Rule, by which Reason must judge of the Truth of Things.

A. If it be such a Rule, must it not have all the Qualifications necessary to make it so? But if Reason must tell us what those Qualifications are, and whether they are to be found in Scripture; and if one of those Qualifications is, that the Scripture must be agreeable to the Nature of Things; does not That suppose the Nature of Things to be the standing Rule, by which we must judge of the Truth of all those Doctrines contain'd in the Scriptures? So that the Scripture can only be a secondary Rule, as far as it is found agreeable to the Nature of Things; or to those self-evident Notions, which are the Foundation of all Knowledge, and Certainty.

In short, no Man can any more discern the Objects of his own Understanding, and their Relations, by the Faculties of another, than he can see with another Man's Eyes; or than one Ship can be guided by the Helm of another: And therefore, he, who demands a Man's Assent to any Thing, without conveying into his Mind such Reasons as may produce a Sense of the Truth of it; erects a Tyranny over his Understanding, and demands an impossible Tribute. No Opinion, tho' ever so certain to one Man, can be infus'd into another as certain, by any Method, but by opening his Understanding, so that he may find the Reasonableness of it in his own Mind; and consequently, the only *Criterion*, by which he tries his own Reasonings, must be the internal Evidence he has already of certain Truths, and the Agreeableness of his Inferences to them. And,

To

To suppose a Creature to have Reason to direct him, and that he is not to be directed by it, is a Contradiction ; and if we are religious as we are rational, can Religion oblige us not to be govern'd by Reason, tho' but for a Moment ? Nay, what is the Religion of all rational Beings, but what the Scripture terms it, *a reasonable Service* ? Or, their Reason employ'd on such Subjects, as conduce to the Dignity of the rational Nature ? So that Religion and Reason were not only given for the same End, the Good of Mankind ; but they are, as far as such Subjects extend, the same, and commence together. And if God can no otherwise apply to Men, but by applying to their Reason, (which he is continually doing by the Light of Nature) does he not by That bid them use their Reason ? And can God at the same Time forbid It, by requiring an implicit Faith in any Person whatever ?

IF You allow, that Men by their reasoning Faculties are made like unto God, and fram'd after his Image ; and that Reason is the most excellent Gift God can bestow ; do they not destroy this Likeness, deface this Image, and give up the Dignity of human Nature, when they give up their Reason to any Person whatever ?

CAN we lay too great a Stress on Reason, when we consider, 'tis only by Virtue of It God can hold Communication with Man ? Nor can otherwise, if I may so speak, witness for himself, or assert the Wisdom and Goodness of his Conduct ; than by submitting his Ways to Mens cool Deliberation, and strict Examination ? since 'tis from the Marks we discern in the Laws of the Universe, and its Government, that we can demonstrate it to be govern'd by a God of infinite Wisdom and Goodness : He, whose Reason
does

does not enable him to do This, can neither discern the Wisdom, Goodness, or even the Being of a God.

THEY only answer the End for which their Reason was given them, who judge of the Will of God, by the Reasonableness and Goodness of Doctrines ; and think his Laws, like his Works, carry in them the Marks of Divinity ; and they likewise do the greatest Honour to the Scripture, who suppose it deals with Men as with rational Creatures ; and therefore admit not of any of its Doctrines without a strict Examination ; and those, who take a contrary Method, wou'd, if they liv'd in *Turky*, embrace *Mahometism*, and believe in the *Alcoran*.

AND indeed, a blind Submission is so far from doing Credit to True Religion, that it puts all Religions on the same Foot ; for without judging of a Religion by its internal Marks, there's nothing but Miracles to plead ; and Miracles true or false, if they are believ'd (and where are they not ?) will have the same Effect : Nay, if Miracles can be perform'd by evil, as well as by good Beings, the worst Religion may have the most Miracles, as needing them most. And it was a proverbial Saying among the Philosophers of *Greece*, *Θαύματα μωροῖς*: *Miracles for Fools, and Reasons for wise Men*. The *Boetians* were remarkable for their Stupidity, and the Number of their Oracles ; and if You look no further than the Christian World, You will find, that Ignorance, and the Belief of daily Miracles go hand in hand ; and that there's nothing too absurd for the Peoples Belief. And if the most learned

See his Almatanz Questions de Concordantia fidei & rationis *Huetius* gives us a true Account of Things, there are no Miracles recorded in the Bible, but many of the like Nature are to be found in Pagan Histories.

Wou'd

Wou'd not Christians themselves, think it a sufficient Proof of a Religion's not coming from God, if it wanted any of those internal Marks, by which the Truth of all Religion is to be try'd, without inquiring into its Miracles, or any other external Proofs ? and consequently, wherever these internal Marks are found, are not external Marks needless ? But,

How can we maintain, that the Scripture carries with it all those internal Marks of Truth, which are inseparable from God's Laws ; and at the same Time affirm, it requires an implicit Faith, and blind Obedience to all its Dictates ? if it does so, how could we have examin'd whether it had those internal Marks ? Or how can we say, we can't know without the Scripture, what are the internal Marks of Truth, and at the same Time suppose, we must by our Reason know what are those Marks, before we can tell whether they are to be found in the Scripture ?

If our Nature is a rational Nature, and our Religion a *reasonable Service*, there must be such a necessary, and close Connexion between them, as to leave no Room for any Thing that is arbitrary to intervene : And consequently, the Religion of all rational Beings must consist, in using such a Conduct to God, and their Fellow-Creatures, as Reason, whatever Circumstances they are in, does direct.

We find St. Paul himself saying, that *Tho' We*, (the Apostles) *or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel, let him be accursed* : And is not this laying the whole Stress on its internal Marks ? Since there's nothing in the Nature of such Things as have not those Marks, to hinder them from being chang'd every Moment.

AND as to those who depress Reason, in Order to exalt Revelation, I wou'd ask them ; what greater Proof the

Scripture can give us of the Rectitude of human Understanding in religious Matters, than calling it the *Inspiration of the Almighty*; or than God's so frequently appealing to it, for the Justification of his own Conduct?

IN the Prophet *Isaiab*, God representing his own Conduct towards his People, under the Parable of a Vineyard, expressly says, *O ye Inhabitants of Jerusalem, and Men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my Vineyard.* And in *Ezekiel*, God, after a long Vindication of his Carriage towards his People, appeals to them, saying, *Hear now, O House of Israel, is not my Way equal? Are not your Ways unequal?* And in the Prophet *Micah* he says, *He will plead with them; asks what he has done; and bids them testify against him.* And in the Prophet *Isaiab*, after the Lord had said, *Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes; Cease to do Evil, learn to do well; seek Judgment, relieve the oppressed; judge the Fatherless, plead for the Widow;* he adds, *Come near, let us reason together, tho' your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow.* Does not God here appeal to their Reason for the Sufficiency of moral Things, to wash away their Sins, tho' of the deepest Die? And cou'd God and Man reason together, except there were some Notions in common to both; some Foundation for such Reasoning? Otherwise how cou'd *Job* say, *I desire to reason with God?* And certainly, the next Thing to reasoning with God, is reasoning with one another about God and Religion; That being the chief End, for which our Reason was giv'n us. Thus Paul reason'd in the Synagogue every Sabbath. And again, *He reason'd with them out of the Scriptures.* And as he reason'd of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembl'd: Which,

Which, certainly, he had never done, had *Paul* talk'd about Types, Allegories, Rites, and Ceremonies, &c.]

B. You argue, as if we had no certain Way of knowing the Will of God, except from the Light of Nature, and that eternal Rule of Reason, by which, You suppose, God governs all his own Actions, and expects Men shou'd govern all theirs; but may not God take what Method he pleases, to communicate his Mind?

A. THIS all traditional Religions with equal Confidence assert; and they wou'd have equal Right to plead it, if Reason did not afford Men certain *Criteria* to know God's Will by, which Way soever reveal'd.

If God created Mankind to make them happy here, or hereafter, the Rules he gave them, must be sufficient to answer that benevolent Purpose of infinite Wisdom; and consequently, had Mankind observ'd them, there cou'd have been no Occasion for an external Revelation; and its great Use now is, to make Men observe those neglected Rules, which God, of his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, design'd for their present, and future Happiness.

B. Do not our Divines say, Mankind were for many Ages in a deplorable State, for want of an external Revelation?

A. If God does every Thing that's fit for him to do, cou'd Men be in such a State, because God did not do a Thing, which was not fit for him to do? *viz.* make a Revelation, before it was fit for him to make it? Or can the greatest Part of Mankind be now in that deplorable Condition, for want of a Revelation, which God, out of his infinite Wisdom, has not as yet thought fit to communicate to them; at least with that Evidence, as is necessary to make them believe it?

MUST not these Gentlemen suppose, that either God, in creating Mankind, did not design their future Happiness, tho' he gave them immortal Souls capable of it; or else, that tho' he design'd it, he prescrib'd them such Means, or gave them such Rules, as either were not sufficient at first; or in Process of Time became insufficient for that End? but that after Men had been, for many Ages, in this miserable Condition, God thought fit to mend the eternal, universal Law of Nature, by adding certain Observances to it, not founded on the Reason of Things; and that those, out of his partial Goodness, he communicated only to some; leaving the greatest Part in their former dark and deplorable State? But,

Is it not incumbent on those, who make any external Revelation so necessary to the Happiness of all Mankind, to shew, how it is consistent with the Notion of God's being universally benevolent, not to have reveal'd it to all his Children, when all had equal Need of it? Was it not as easy for him to have communicated it to all Nations, as to any one Nation, or Person? Or in all Languages, as in any One? Nay, was it not as easy for him to have made all Men, for the sake of this noble End, speak in one, and the same Language; as it was at first, to multiply Languages, to prevent their building a Tower up to Heaven? Nay, I see not how God can have any Need at all of Language, to let Mankind know his Will; since he has at all Times communicated his Mind to them without it.

B. THESE, I confess, are considerable Difficulties; but as to the last Difficulty, did not God give Laws to the *Jews*, of which other Nations knew nothing?

A. NOR were they concern'd to know, or when known, oblig'd to observe them; nor did they bind the *Jews* themselves,

themselves, but for a Time; and even then, they were for the most Part impracticable, out of the Land of *Canaan*; where God, as I shall fully shew hereafter, acted, not as Governour of the *Universe*, but as King of the *Jews*, by Virtue of the *Horeb Covenant*; which he obtain'd at his own Request. But when God acts as Governour of the *Universe*, his Laws are alike design'd for all under his Government; that is, all Mankind: And consequently, what equally concerns all, must be equally knowable by all. And if the Universality of a Law, be the only certain Mark of its coming from the Governour of Mankind; how can we be certain, That, which wants this Mark, comes from him? And if Religion belongs to us; as we are Men, must we not, as Men, be capable of knowing it? And if all Mankind are Creatures of the same Creator; and Fellow-Creatures with one another, must not all their religious Duties, as they are Creatures of the same God, and Fellow-Creatures with one another, be the same? And let me add, that

If Men are religious, as they are rational; must they not be capable, when they come to the Use of their Reason, of knowing a Religion founded on Reason? Or must they be oblig'd to leave their Country, and endlessly rove up and down, in search of such Opinions, as have no Foundation in Reason? Or, if they are forc'd to stay at Home, be ever examining into all the arbitrary Precepts, which are to be met with in any of the traditional Religions they can come at? And shou'd they do so, must they not, since Reason cou'd not direct them in Things not depending on Reason, perpetually remain in a State of Uncertainty?

I might go further, and ask You, Whether it is consistent with that Impartiality, which is essential to the Deity, not to make those, he designs should know his Will by Revelation, capable of knowing that Revelation; and consequently, his Will, contain'd it, at one Time as well as another? Which cou'd not be, if that which was plain at first, became obscure by Reason of the Change of Languages, Customs, the Distance of Time and Place, the Errors of Transcribers and Translators, and an hundred other Things too long to mention. Can these Difficulties be avoided, without supposing, that Religion, which Way soever reveal'd, carries such internal Marks of Truth, as, at all Times and Places, plainly shews itself, even to the meanest Capacity, to be the Will of a Being of universal and impartial Benevolence.

B. THE greater Stress You lay on Reason, the more You extol Revelation; which being design'd to exalt and perfect our rational Nature, must be itself highly reasonable.

A. I grant You this is the Design of Religion; but have not the Ecclesiasticks in most Places entirely defeated this Design; and so far debas'd human Nature, as to render it unsociable, fierce and cruel? Have they not made external Revelation the Pretence of filling the Christian World with Animosity, Hatred, Persecution, Ruin and Destruction; in Order to get an absolute Dominion over the Consciences, Properties and Persons of the Laity? But passing this over, If the Perfection of any Nature, whether human, angelical, or divine, consists in being govern'd by the Law of its Nature; and ours, in acting that Part, for which we were created; by observing all those Duties, which are founded on the Relation we
stand

stand in to God and one another ; can Revelation any otherwise help to perfect human Nature, but as it induces Men to live up to this Law of their Nature ? And if this Law is the Test of the Perfection of any written Law ; must not That be the most perfect Law, by which the Perfection of all others is to be try'd ? And,

If nothing but Reasoning can improve Reason, and no Book can improve my Reason in any Point, but as it gives me convincing Proofs of its Reasonableness ; a Revelation, that will not suffer us to judge of its Dictates by our Reason, is so far from improving Reason, that it forbids the Use of it ; and reasoning Faculties unexercis'd, will have as little Force, as unexercis'd Limbs ; He that is always carry'd, will at length become unable to go : And if the *Holy Ghost*, as Bishop Taylor says, *works by beightening, and improving our natural Faculties* ; Liberty of Prophecy- c. 18. p. 190 it can only be by using such Means as will improve them, in proposing Reasons and Arguments to convince our Understanding ; which can only be improv'd, by studying the Nature and Reason of Things : *I apply'd my Heart* (says the wisest of Men) *to know, and to search, and to seek out Wisdom, and the Reason of Things.* Ecclef. 7. 24

So that the Holy Ghost can't deal with Men as rational Creatures, but by proposing Arguments to convince their Understandings, and influence their Wills, in the same Manner as if propos'd by other Agents ; for to go beyond This, would be making Impressions on Men, as a Seal does on Wax ; to the confounding of their Reason, and their Liberty in choosing ; and the Man would then be merely passive, and the Action would be the Action of another Being acting upon him ; for which he could be no Way accountable : But if the Holy Ghost does

not

not act thus, and Revelation itself be not arbitrary; must it not be founded on the Reason of Things? And consequently, be a *Republication, or Restoration of the Religion of Nature*? And since that takes in every Thing thus founded, all the Help any Authority whatever can afford a reasonable Being, is the offering him Arguments, of which his own Reason must judge: And when he perceives their Agreement with his self-evident Notions, 'tis *then*, and only *then*, he can be sure of their Truth: And tho' Men cou'd not mistake, as we see they daily do, a natural for a supernatural Suggestion; yet whether that Suggestion comes from a good or evil Being, (continually tempting People) can only be judg'd by the Nature of the Things suggested. For 'tis in vain to have Recourse to Miracles, if evil as well as good Beings had the Power of doing them? And some are so heterodox, as to imagine, one Reason why evil Beings are permitted to do Miracles, is, least from the Report of Miracles, (which is alike spread every where, and for every Religion) Men might be tempted not to rely on the Reason and Nature of Things; and so run into endless Superstitions. And,

Deut. 13. 1-3. GOD, in the Old Testament, is said to suffer Miracles to be done by false Prophets, in Order to prove his People; and in the New, such Miracles, as wou'd, *if*

Mat. 24. 24. *it were possible, deceive the very Elect.*

IN short, Revelation either bids, or forbids Men to use their Reason, in judging of all religious Matters; if the former, then it only declares That to be our Duty, which was so independent of and, antecedent to Revelation; if the latter, then it does not deal with Men as with rational Creatures; but deprives them of that inestimable Blessing.

B. WHO

B. WHO, I pray, maintains, that Revelation forbids us the Use of our Reason, in judging of the Truth of any religious Matters ?

A. Is not every One of this Opinion, that says, we are not to read the Scripture with Freedom of assenting, or dissenting, just as we judge it agrees, or disagrees with the Light of Nature, and the Reason of Things ? And this, one would think, none cou'd deny was absolutely necessary, in reading a Book, where 'tis own'd that the *Letter killeth*. Nay, do not all in Effect own as much, who will not allow the Scripture any Meaning, how plain soever, but what is agreeable to their Reason ? which shews, that in their Opinion, Reason was rather given to supply the Defects of Revelation, than Revelation the Defects of Reason. Is there a Divine, who, tho' he pretends ever so high a Veneration for the Scripture, but will own there are many Places, where 'tis necessary to recede from the Letter, and find out a Sense agreeable to his Reason ; which supposes it is That, and not the Authority of the Book, for that's the same in both Cases ; which makes him approve the literal Sense in one Case, and condemn it in another. And were Men not govern'd by their Reason, but by some external Revelation, they had nothing more to do, but to take the Words of that Revelation, in its literal, obvious, and plain Meaning, how absurd soever it might appear to their carnal Reason.

B. WE may take the Words of fallible Men in the plain, literal Sense ; but if any Thing is said by infallible Men, which in the obvious Meaning of the Words is inconsistent with Reason, we must have Recourse to an allegorical Sense ; or if that will not do, we must put no Meaning at all on the Words ; thus we support the Dignity of both Revelation and Reason.

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A. Is

A. Is not This owning you take not your Religion from those infallible Men, but you endeavour to impose that Religion your Reason tells you is true, upon their Words; by allowing them no other Meaning, how plain soever, but what you antecedently know by the Light of Nature to be the Will of God. And

THERE'S no Book, but You may own its Infallibility, and yet be entirely govern'd by your Reason, if You, as often as You find any Thing not agreeable to your Reason, torture it, to make it speak what is so. Would you think a *Mabometan* was govern'd by his *Alchoran*, who, upon all Occasions should thus depart from the literal Sense; nay, would You not tell him, that his inspir'd Book fell infinitely short of *Cicero's* uninspir'd Writings; where there is no such Occasion to recede from the Letter?

Mabom. Life
in Eng. before
Retland's Ma-
homet. p. 39, 40.

THE *Moammarites*, a famous Sect among the *Mabometans*, and the *Myficks*, very numerous in *Turky*, sensible of the Difficulties and Uncertainties that attend all traditional Facts, maintain, "That God can never discover himself with Certainty any other Way, than by speaking to the Reason and Understanding of Men: For if we depend, say they, on Oral Tradition, we lay ourselves open to the greatest Falsities and Impositions; there being nothing so liable to infinite Changes and Alterations, numberless Mistakes, Additions and Substractions, according as Mens Opinions vary by the Change of Times and Circumstances: Nor are Books more exempt from such Doubtfulness and Uncertainty; since we find so much Disagreement among Books wrote by different Men, in different Parts and different Ages; and even among the different Books of the same Men. But suppose, continue they,

" we

“ we should resolve all our Faith into the sole Text of the
 “ *Alchoran*, the Difficulty and Uncertainty will still re-
 “ main; if we consider, how many *Metaphors*, *Allegories*,
 “ and other *Figures* of Speech; how many obscure, ambi-
 “ guous, intricate and mysterious *Passages* are to be met
 “ with in this infallible Book; and how different are the
 “ Opinions, Expositions and Interpretations of the most
 “ subtle Doctors, and learned Commentators on every one
 “ of them. The only sure Way, then, add they, to come
 “ to the certain Knowledge of the Truth, is to consult
 “ God himself, wait his Inspirations, live just and honest
 “ Lives, be kind and beneficent to all our Fellow-Crea-
 “ tures, and pity such as differ from us in their Opini-
 “ ons about the Authority, Integrity, and Meaning of the
 “ *Alchoran*.

THE *Mabometans*, tho' they own the Law of Christ, yet
 they make it of no Use, because they suppose, the Law of
Mabomet is more perfect; and 'tis That they must stick to:
 And do not some Men, by arguing much after the same
 Manner in relation to the Gospel, render the Law of Na-
 ture useless? But if we are still moral Agents, and as such
 are capable of judging between Religion and Superstition;
 can we think otherwise of the Gospel, than that it is de-
 sign'd, not to free us from the eternal Law of Nature, but
 from those Absurdities, which the Folly or Knavery of
 Men have introduc'd in Opposition to it? Hence it is, that
 the Scripture speaks in general Terms, without defining
 those Things which it commands, or forbids; because it sup-
 poses Men moral Agents, capable by their Reason to discern
 Good from Evil, Virtue from Vice, Religion from Super-
 stition.

Posthumous
Works p 226

IF Mr. *Lock* reasons justly, “ No Mission can be look’d on
“ to be divine, that delivers any Thing derogating from the
“ Honour of the one, only, true, invisible God ; or incon-
“ sistent with Natural Religion and the Rules of Morality :
“ Because God having discover’d to Men the Unity and Ma-
“ jesty of His eternal Godhead, and the Truths of Natural
“ Religion and Morality by the Light of Reason, he cannot
“ be suppos’d to back the contrary by Revelation ; for that
“ would be to destroy the Evidence and Use of Reason,
“ without which, Men cannot be able to distinguish divine
“ Revelation from diabolical Imposture.

Does not this suppose, *First*, That no Mission can be
divine, or its Revelation true, that admits of more than
one, only, true, invisible God ? *Secondly*, That Men, by
their Reason, must know, wherein the Honour of this one,
only, true, invisible God consists ; otherwise, they might
(for ought they know) be oblig’d by Revelation to admit
what is derogatory to his Honour ? *Thirdly*, They must
know by the Light of Reason, what are the Truths of
Natural Religion and Rules of Morality ; because other-
wise they might be oblig’d to admit Things inconsistent
with them : And that to suppose the contrary, wou’d be
to destroy the Use and Evidence of Reason, without which,
Men would not be able to distinguish divine Revelation
from diabolical Imposture ; which implies, that in Things
tending to the Honour of God, and the Good of Mankind,
the *dernier* Resort is to Reason ; whose Dictates, as they need
no Miracles for their Support, so all Doctrines inconsistent
with them, tho’ they plead endless Miracles, must be look’d
upon as diabolical Impostures. And

W.HEN

WHEN the Apostle says, *Whatsoever Things are true,* Phil. 4. 8. *whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report, if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, think on these Things;* is not this referring us to the Light of Nature, to know what these Things are, which shew themselves to be the Will of God by their internal Excellency?

B. OUR Divines, tho' they own Reason may do tolerably well in Things between Man and Man, yet in Matters relating to God, Reason, *they say,* must submit to Faith; and that the chief End of Revelation is to give Men, especially the common People, just Conceptions, and right Notions of the Nature and Perfections of God; which they cou'd never have from the dim Light of Nature, without the Help of Revelation.

A. THO' they argue thus, yet at the same Time they find themselves oblig'd to own, that the Scripture, when taken literally, gives the Vulgar false and unworthy Notions of the divine Nature; by imputing, almost every where, to God, not only human Parts, but human Weakness and Imperfections, and even the worst of human Passions. To this, indeed, they have two Answers, which seem inconsistent: First, That 'tis necessary to accommodate Things in some Measure to the gross Conceptions of the Vulgar. The Other is, that Reason has given all Men such just Conceptions of the divine Nature, that there's no Danger that even the common People shou'd take these Expressions literally.

B. THO' Reason, on which You lay such Stress, may demonstrate, that there are not more Gods than One; yet Reason can never tell us, that there's more than One that is
God;

God ; tho' Reason tells us, that there are not Three Gods, yet Reason cou'd never tell us, that, tho' in the Idea of a divine Person, the Idea of God be included, each Person being by himself God ; yet that the Multiplying of divine Persons, was not the Multiplying of Gods ? And tho' Reason declares, there's a Difference between Three and One ; yet Reason will never discover, that there's no more in Three Persons, than in One ; all Three together being the same Numerical God, as each is by himself. Reason will never be able to find out a Middle between a Numerical, and a Specifick Unity ; between One in Number, and One in Kind ; and yet without it, how can we suppose the same God to be self-existent, and not self-existent, &c. Reason can as little discover a *Medium* between a Nominal, and a Real Difference ; and yet without it how can we avoid *Sabellianism* on the one Hand, or *Polytheism* on the other ? There's nothing Reason can tell us more plainly, than that God and a Man are two distinct, intelligent Persons ; but can Reason tell us they may become one intelligent Person, even while their personal Natures and Properties remain infinitely distinct and different ? Thus You see, how Reason must submit to Faith.

A. I, for my Part, not understanding these Orthodox Paradoxes, can only at present say, I do not disbelieve them ; but must add, that as I am a rational Creature, and God requires of me a *reasonable Service*, I ought not, nay, I cannot have any Faith, which will not bear the Test of Reason ; and therefore, notwithstanding your Maxim of Reason's submitting to Faith, I will venture to affirm, if a Book assert (supposing the Words of it are taken in their plain, literal Sense) immoral, or impious Doctrines ; and there are not in that Book certain Marks to tell us, where they

they are to be taken literally, and where figuratively ; or, what is the figurative Sense ; that Men in these Points are as much. to be determin'd by their Reason, as if there was no such Book.

B. THIS, sure, can't be the Case with relation to the Scriptures.

A. I shall only tell You what the most celebrated Fathers say on this Head. *Atbanasius* says, (*a*) " Should we " understand a great Part of the sacred Writ literally, we " should fall into most enormous Blasphemies. " *St. Cyril* says (*b*) much the same. *St. Gregory* the first says, (*c*) " The " Scripture is not only dead, but deadly ; for it is written, " *The Letter kills, but the Spirit quicknetb* ; and this is " what the whole divine Letter does. " And in another Place (*d*) he compares them to Beasts who regard the Letter. And *St. Jerom* says, (*e*) " If we adhere to the Flesh " of the Letter, it will be the Occasion of many Evils. " And *Gregory Nyssen* (*f*) makes the like Reflection.

B. I durst not have made so bold with the Scriptures, as these Fathers ; but content myself with saying with the excellent Bishop of *Litchfield*, that " God, was he to speak " with Men, must not only speak their very Language, " but according to the Conceptions of those, he speaks " to : To rectify their Sentiments in *Natural, Historical,* " or *Chronological* Matters ; to mend their *Logick*, or *Rhetorick* when 'tis defective ; but has no ill Influence on Piety, is not the Business of Revelation. — Needlesly

*Defence of
Christian.
p. 363.*

(*a*) *Quæstiones ad Antiochum*, To. 2. p. 357. D (*b*) L. 9. contr. *Julian*, p. 303. 304, to. 6. Oper. (*c*) Comm on 2 Kings c. 7. (*d*) Prolog. in Cant. Cantic. fol. 256. col. 1. B. (*e*) In Gal. c. 5. p. 84 B. (*f*) *De vita Moyfis*, To. 1. p. 235. D. & d.

“to contradict innocent vulgar Notions, is the sure Way
 “to lose the Peoples Affections, and to forego a prudential
 “Way of gaining them.”

A. WITH Submission to this learned Author, is there
 no Difference between God's not rectifying Mens Sentiments in those Matters, and using himself such Sentiments as need to be rectify'd; or between God's not mending Mens *Logick*, or *Rhetorick*, where 'tis defective, and using such himself; or between God's not contradicting vulgar Notions, and confirming them; by speaking according to them? Or can the God of Truth, stand in need of Error to support his Truth; his eternal Truth? Or can infinite Wisdom despair of gaining, or keeping Peoples Affections, without having Recourse to such mean Arts? No Wonder, if Men use pious Frauds, when they think God himself has Recourse to them. In this Case, must not Men by their Reason judge, when God makes use of defective *Logick*, or *Rhetorick*; and speaks in *Natural*, *Historical*, and *Chronological* Matters, not according to the Truth of Things, but according to the Conceptions of those of the vulgar, to whom he directs his Speech? Nor can I think of any Falshood, suppos'd to be authoris'd by the God of Truth, but may be made use of to some ill Purpose; in *Divinity* as well as *Mathematicks* it's a certain Maxim, *Uno absurdo dato mille sequentur*.

St. *Austin* argues after another Manner, in saying,
Gen. ad Lit. l. 1. c. 19. “Should Unbelievers know us to be mistaken in such
 “Things as concern the Natural World, and alledge our
 “Books for such vain Opinions; how shall they believe
 “the same Books, when they speak of the Resurrection
 “of the Dead, and the World to come?”

Dr.

DR. *Prideaux*, speaking of the Marks of Imposture, says,
 " If there be but one known Truth in the whole Scheme
 " of Nature with which it interferes, This must make the
 " Discovery; and there's no Man, that forgeth an *Imposture*,
 " but makes himself liable to be this Way convicted of it."
 The Doctor, sure, wou'd not have asserted this so roundly,
 had he not compar'd the Philosophical, and Scriptural
 Scheme of Nature, and perceiv'd their exact Agreement.
 But,

NOT only Dr. *Burnet*, in Defence of his *Archæologia*,
 but all, who maintain, that the Sun is immovable, and
 that 'tis the Earth which moves; sufficiently shew, that the
 Scriptural and Philosophical Account of Natural Things sel-
 dom agree: However, to give one Instance, there's scarce a
 Country-man so ignorant, as not to know, that if the Seed
 thrown into the Earth is kill'd by Drought, or dies by
 any other Accident, it never rises; but St. *Paul* (without
 regard to that Judgment, which our Saviour denounces
 against a Man who calls his Brother *Fool*;) says, *Thou Fool*,
 that which thou sowest is not quickned, except it die: And our
 Saviour himself says, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a*
Corn of Wheat fall into the Ground, and die, it abideth
alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much Fruit. And the
 Greek Church, at this Day, make use of boil'd Corn at their
 Commemoration of their Dead, to signify the *Resurrection*
 of the Body.

To convince You how entirely we are to depend on
 Reason in Matters of Religion, I will only ask You, Why
 You suppose it so absurd in the *Papists* to say, that Men
 bred up in their Church, are oblig'd intirely to depend on
 its Infallibility; and that they, who have not had the Hap-
 piness to be thus educated, ought, indeed, to use their Rea-

son to bring them into their Church ; but that then they are no longer to be govern'd by it, but with the rest of the Members, equally to rely on the Church's infallible Decisions.

B. BECAUSE this suppos'd Infallibility puts it in the Power of that Church, to make their Votaries believe Virtue to be Vice ; and Vice, Virtue ; or any other Absurdity whatever ; since they have no Way to know, whether it does not require such Things, but by examining, by their Reason, all her Doctrines ; and if Reason be sufficient to discover the Being and Will of God, and that their Church holds no Doctrines disagreeable to his Will, (for this they must own Reason capable of discovering, before it could bring Men into their Church) they, in spite of their Pretences to Infallibility, put the whole Stress on Reason. And if afterwards, they teach Men to renounce *that Reason*, by which before they would have them wholly govern'd ; it can be for no other Cause, but to prevent their discovering in that Church such Errors, as they cou'd not well know before ; and which, if known, wou'd have hinder'd them from coming into it.

A. THE *Papists*, You know, reply, that if this Reasoning is good, it strikes at all implicit Faith in *St. Peter*, as well as his Successors ; and equally concludes against Mens giving up their Reason to any Persons in former Ages, as well as the present ; since 'tis by that alone they are able to judge, whether their Doctrines are consistent with the Light of Nature, and free from Superstition ; and contain nothing in them unworthy of a divine Original : Before examining what Men teach, there's no Reason to have an implicit Faith in in one Set of Men more than another ; and Examination destroys all implicit Faith, and all Authority whatever ;
since

“ since if they then embrace the Opinions of others, whether Apostles or not, 'tis because they appear agreeable to their Reason. If You say, the Apostles wou'd by Reason bring Men into their Religion, and after that, have them wholly govern'd by their Authority; may not the *Papists* retort on you your own Answer? and cry, “ That if Reason is sufficient to discover the Being and Will of God, “ and that the Apostles taught no Doctrines, but what are “ agreeable to his Will; (for this, *say they*, You must allow Reason capable of discovering, otherwise it cou'd “ never lead Men to believe what the Apostles taught;) “ You alike put the whole Stress on Reason. And You “ must own, either that Men are intirely to be govern'd by “ Reason, and then you destroy all Authority whatever; or “ else not to be govern'd by it, and then you can't, by Reason, shew the Absurdity of that implicit Faith, the Catholick Church requires.

“ B. You know, that in Answer to all Objections of this Nature, we say as Bishop *Burnet* does, in his Exposition of the *Articles* of our Church, “ That if we observe the Style Expos. of the 19th Article, p. 183. “ and Method of the Scriptures, we shall find in them all “ over a constant Appeal to Mens Reason, and to their intellectual Faculties. If the meer Dictates of the Church, “ or of *infallible Men*, had been the Resolution and Foundation of Faith, there had been no need of such a long “ Thread of Reasoning and Discourse, as both our Saviour “ us'd when on Earth, and the Apostles us'd in their Writings. We see the Way of Authority is not taken, but “ Explanations are offer'd, Proofs, and Illustrations are “ brought, to convince the Mind; which shews that God, “ in the clearest Manifestation of his Will, wou'd deal with “ us as with rational Creatures, who are not to believe, but

“ on Persuasion ; and to use our Reason, in Order to the
 “ attaining that Persuasion.

A. THIS is all I contend for, and had not what the Bishop says, (tho’ it amounts to giving up all implicit Faith) been agreeable to the whole Tenor of the Scriptures, and the Doctrines of our Church ; some of those, who have so nicely examin’d into all Parts of his *Exposition* of the Articles, wou’d never have let this Passage escape without Remarks. And, therefore, since ’tis in Defence of the *Protestant Religion*, and the whole Current of Scripture, I shall add, to what this excellent Father of the Church has said ; that when any Person has Recourse to Arguments and Reasonings, he does, in those Instances, disclaim all Authority, and appeals to the Reason of those he means to persuade ; and, in Order to it, wou’d have them judge of the Force of his Arguments, by those common, and self-evident Notions, upon which the Validity of all Proofs depend ; and Men, in examining what he says by that Reason to which he appeals, wholly answer the End for which he argues with them ; tho’, upon Examination, they are not convinc’d by his Reasons. To require more, wou’d be to require Impossibilities ; since ’tis not in Mens Power, after they have consider’d Things as well as they are able, to believe otherwise than they do. And had the Apostles said to those they design’d to convert ; “ It will be
 “ an Affront to our Infallibility, not to have an implicit
 “ Faith in us ; not to take on Content whatever we say ;
 “ You are, therefore, no longer to act as moral Agents, or
 “ to have Recourse to the essential Difference of Good and
 “ Evil ; to the Light and Law of Nature, or to the eternal Reason of Things, to judge of the Truth of what we
 “ declare. No, this is the Faith, and thus you must believe,
 or

or perish everlastingly." Had the Apostles, I say, talk'd after this Manner, do you think they could have gain'd one reasonable Convert? No, they knew full well, that this was not the Way to deal with rational Creatures; they, on the contrary, as I shall fully shew hereafter, every where speak to this Effect, " We desire you would, with the utmost Freedom, examine our Doctrines; since if they are, as we ^{1 Thes. 5. 21} affirm, true, they will not only bear the Test of Reason, but the more they are try'd, the brighter they will appear: This will be *enobling* yourselves, and doing Justice ^{Acts. 17. 11} to your own Understandings, as well as to our Doctrines." If Men have any Authority, 'tis then only, when they renounce all peremptory Authority; and instead of claiming *Dominion over Mens Faith*, desire they would prove every Thing by those Tests God had given them, in order to discern Good from Evil, Truth from Falshood, Religion from Superstition; thus the Apostle seeks to maintain his Credit and Authority with the *Thessalonians*; *Prove all Things*, says he, *bold fast that which is Good.*

B. Do not You, by laying such a Stress on Reason, in Effect, set aside Revelation?

A. No, if Revelation be a reasonable Revelation, the greater Stress we lay upon Reason, the more we establish Revelation.

B. BUT not on the Foot of its own Authority, but only as You judge it agreeable to Reason; and therefore I question, whether any of our eminent Divines talk thus in Commendation of Reason, to the Disparagement of Authority.

A. IF Reason is all we rational Creatures have to trust to, being That alone which distinguishes us from Brutes, incapable of Religion; Divines, even those of the most narrow Principles, however they may shuffle a while, must make

make Reason their *dernier* Resort; but however, since Reason alone will not satisfy You, but You must have Authority even against Authority, I shall mention what some of our most eminent Divines say, when they are defending Revelation against the Attacks of *Infidels*; or writing against the *Papists*, or Men *popishly* affected.

DR. J. Clarke, Dean of Sarum, in defending Christianity against the Attacks of *Infidels*, who charge it with requiring an implicit Faith, thinks This such a Scandal to Christianity, that a good Part of his *Boylean Lectures* are to clear it from that Charge; “ We find, *says he*, no Command in
Orig. of Moral Evil, p. 88. “ Scripture to lay aside our Reason or Understanding, but
 “ directly the contrary is there affirmed of the Christian Religion; *viz.* that it is our *reasonable* Service: And there-
Rom. xiii. 1. “ fore the Method in which Christ and his Apostles taught
 “ *this Service*, was agreeable to Reason; *viz.* by exhorting
Mat. xi. 15. “ Men to *attend seriously*, to *weigh diligently*, their Doc-
Orig of Moral Evil, p 89. “ trines and Precepts, &c. *and then asks*, Are these, and
 “ such like Expressions calculated to enslave Mens Under-
 “ standings, and to induce a blind and implicit Obedience?
 “ Such Methods may serve the Purpose of Superstition, but
 “ true Religion can gain nothing by them.

DR. *Whitchcot* does this Justice to external Revelation, as
Vol. of Sermons, p. 117. as to say, “ The Scripture’s Way of dealing with Men in
 “ Matters of Religion, is always by Evidence of Reason
 “ and Argument; *and very judiciously adds*, I reckon, That
 “ which has not Reason in it, or for it, is Man’s Supersti-
 “ tion, and not Religion of God’s making:” What an Infini-
 “ nity of Disputes would this Rule have cut off? What I
 pray, was the grand Occasion of so many monstrous *Here-*
sies, even in the primitive Times, but their believing the
 Scripture’s Way of dealing with Men, was not by Evidence
 of

of Reason. And if any now think otherwise, are they not in Danger of making no better Distinction between Religion and Superstition, than a modern Philosopher, who thus concisely distinguishes them; *Tales publickly allow'd, Religion; Hobbes not allow'd, Superstition.*

BR. Hoadly, the strenuous Assertor of our religious, as well as civil Rights, says, " Authority is the greatest and most irreconcilable Enemy to Truth and Argument, that ^{Ans. to the} *this* ^{Express. of the} *World* ^{Comm. of the} ever furnish'd out; All the *Sophistry*; all the *Co-* ^{lower House of} *lour* ^{Comm. p. 312} of *Plausibility*; all the *Artifice* and *Cunning* of the ^{313, 314, 315.} *subtilest Disputer* in the World, may be laid open, and turn'd to the Advantage of that very Truth, which they design'd to hide, or to depress: But against *Authority* there is no Defence." And after having shewn, that it was *Authority* that crush'd the noble Sentiments of *Socrates* and Others; and that it was by *Authority*, that the *Jews* and *Heathens* combated the Truth of the Gospel; he says, " When *Christians* were increas'd to a *Majority*, and came to think the same Method to be the only proper One, for the Advantage of *their* Cause, which had been the Enemy and Destroyer of it; then, it was the *Authority* of *Christians*, which, by Degrees, not only laid waste the Honour of *Christianity*, but well nigh extinguish'd it among Men. — It was *Authority*, which wou'd have prevented all *Reformation*, where it is; and which has put a *Barrier* against it, wherever it is not. — How indeed, can it be expected, that the *same Thing*, which has in all Ages, and in all Countries, been hurtful to *Truth*, and *True Religion*, amongst Men, shou'd in *any* Age, or *any* Country, become a Friend and Guardian of them." And to obviate an Objection easily foreseen, he says, " It was *Authority*, which hinder'd the Voice of the *Son of God* " him-

“ himself from being heard ; and which alone stood in Opposition to *his* powerful *Arguments*, and his divine *Doctrine*.” Which supposes there’s no Christian Doctrine, but what has powerful Arguments to support it ; or in other Words, has Divinity stamp’d on it, shewing itself by its innate Excellency to be the Will of God ; since to put its Credit on meer Authority, is to put its Credit on that, which has been, and always will be, an Enemy to Truth : Nay, he supposes, that were it possible, that Authority and Truth cou’d consist together, and the latter be receiv’d for the sake of the former, it cou’d not avail. His Words are, “ Where *Truth* happens to be receiv’d for the sake of Authority ; there is just so much diminish’d from the Love of Truth, and the Glory of Reason, and the Acceptableness of Men to God ; as there is attributed to *Authority*.” And,

Serm. Vol. 3. ARCHBISHOP Tillotson says, “ All our Reasonings about
P. 40 “ divine Revelation are necessarily gather’d by our natural
“ Notions about Religion ; and therefore, he, who sincerely
“ desires to do the Will of God, is not apt to be impos’d on
“ by vain, and confident Pretences of divine Revelation ;
“ but if any Doctrine be propos’d to him, which is pre-
“ tended to come from God, he measures it by those sure,
“ and steady Notions, which he has of the divine Nature
“ and Perfections ; and by these he will easily discern, whe-
“ ther it be worthy of God or not, and likely to proceed
“ from him : He will consider the Nature and Tendency of
“ it, or whether it be a Doctrine according to Godliness,
“ such as is agreeable to the divine Nature and Perfections,
“ and tends to make us like unto God ; if it be not, tho’ an
“ Angel should bring it, he would not receive it.” And if
no Miracles, no, not the Preaching of an Angel, ought to make
make

“make us receive any Doctrine that does not carry those
 “internal Marks; no Miracles, certainly, ought to make
 “us reject any Doctrine that has these internal Marks.” And
 much to the same Purpose, our judicious Doctor *Claget*
 says, “When Men pretend to work Miracles, and talk of *Claget's Persuasive to an*
 “immediate Revelations, of knowing the Truth by Inspi-
 “ration, and of more than ordinary Illumination, we ought *ingenuous Trial of Opin-*
 “not to be frighted with those big Words, from looking
 “what is under them; nor to be afraid of calling these
 “Things into Question, which are set off with *high-flown*
 “Pretences. From hence it has come to pass, that Su-
 “perstition and Idolatry, Enthusiasms and Impositions have
 “so much prevail'd in the World. It is somewhat strange,
 “that we should believe Men the more, for that very Rea-
 “son upon which we should believe them the less.

I shall give You the Sentiments of one judicious Divine *Enthusiasm of the Ch. of*
 more, since they contain a Summary of what I have been *Rome. p. 234.*
 saying; his Words are, “It could not be avoidable, but *suppos'd to be*
 “that this natural Reverence for divine Revelations, and *Stillingfleet's.*
 “Proneness of believing them, would produce some ill
 “Effects, prejudicial to the Reason and Interest of Man-
 “kind; a fatal Credulity would creep into the World, and
 “possess the Minds of the more ignorant Persons; and in-
 “duce them blindly to believe every bold Pretender to Re-
 “velation. After a laborious and fruitless Search of future
 “Happiness, Men were apt to embrace any System of Re-
 “ligion presented to them; if it flatter'd their Hopes of fu-
 “ture Felicity, they were loth to discover the Error and
 “Illusion of any pleasing Revelation; they wish'd it might
 “be true, and at first, what they wish'd, they at last be-
 “liev'd to be true. — Many fear'd they should be injurious
 “to the divine Majesty, and incur the Guilt of *Atheism*, if
 “they

“ they should scrupulously examine what pretended to car-
 “ ry the Stamp of his Authority, and to have been re-
 “ veal’d by him. To entertain Scruples in this Case, was
 “ thought no less than Sacrilege, and every Doubt was
 “ esteem’d an Affront to God; to which may be added,
 “ That they should contract no small Merit, and ever lay
 “ an Obligation on God, if they immediately resign’d up
 “ their Judgment to his suppos’d Revelation, and blindly
 “ receiv’d it without any Doubt or Hesitation.

“ THIS in all Ages, open’d a wide Gap, and prepar’d a
 “ Way for Error and Superstition; while the Whimfies of
 “ every foolish *Entbusiast*, and the Follies of every bold *Im-*
 “ *postor* were propos’d under the venerable Name of *divine*
 “ *Oracles*. — Hence all the Absurdities of the *Pagan Re-*
 “ *ligion* found Belief, and Entertainment in the World;
 “ and the most extravagant *Impostors* never wanted *Prose-*
 “ *lytes*. Hence the most pernicious Errors of *Hereticks*,
 “ found Admission into the Church; and the Pretence of
 “ new Revelations, seduc’d some Part of the *Christian*
 “ World.

“ To this fatal Credulity, and Danger of Illusion arising
 “ from it, God and Nature have prescrib’d an excellent
 “ Remedy; the Use of our Reason, which may examine
 “ the Grounds and Testimonies of all pretended Revelati-
 “ ons; enquire into their Truth, and after a scrupulous
 “ Trial, pass Sentence on them. This, the Interest of
 “ Truth, and the Honour of our Nature requires us to per-
 “ form, that we may neither prostitute the former, nor de-
 “ preciate the latter. — Without this precedent Enquiry,
 “ our Belief would become unlawful; for to obviate the
 “ the Rules of Conduct, prescrib’d to our Understanding,
 “ were to overthrow all the Laws of Nature, to debase the
 “ the

“ the Dignity of Mankind, and to efface the Image of God
 “ implanted in us. These Rules assure us, that God can’t
 “ command any Thing foolish or ridiculous. — No greater
 “ Injury can be offer’d to the Deity, than to believe him
 “ the Author of any Religion, which prescribes, or encour-
 “ ages foolish, or superstitious Practices. — Justly does
 “ *Plutarch* wonder, why *Atheism* should rather be accus’d
 “ of Impiety, than Superstition; since few are mov’d by
 “ any Defect in the Order of Government, to call in Ques-
 “ tion the Existence of God; but the Tricks and Cheats
 “ of superstitious Persons, their *Enthusiastick* Motions, ri-
 “ diculous Actions, Exorcisms, and Lustrations, and such
 “ like; give them Occasion to believe it better there should
 “ be no God, than such a God, as the Author of such a su-
 “ perstitious Religion must necessarily be.

If this Author reasons justly, as all *Protestants* will allow, at least, when they write against the *Enthusiasm* of the Church of *Rome*; does it not follow, that ’tis our Duty, before we embrace any instituted Religion, to examine by that Light which God has given us, into every Part of it; and after a scrupulous Trial, pass Sentence on it? If the Interest of Truth, and the Honour of Man’s Nature require them to perform this grand Duty, must not their Reason, antecedently to all external Revelation, afford certain Tests to distinguish between Truth and Falshood in all religious Matters? ’Twould be ridiculous to tell Men, that ’tis a Crime worse than *Atheism*, to admit a Religion, which prescribes, or encourages foolish or superstitious Practices; unless upon a Supposition, that their Reason can tell them what are such Practices; and thereby hinder them from embracing a Religion, which requires Things of this Nature. And if Men are apt to embrace any Religion (the

Mahometan for Instance) which flatters their Hopes of future Felicity, and makes them loth to discover the pleasing Illusion; does it not follow, that the more any Religion does so, the more Cause Men have critically to examine into its Reasonableness? Because without such a precedent Enquiry, their Belief would be irrational and unlawful, debasing the Dignity of Mankind, and effacing the Image of God implanted in them. And;

If the Absurdities, not only of the *Pagan* Religion, but even the most pernicious Errors among *Christians*, have been occasion'd thro' Want of previous Examination; nothing can be requisite to discover True Christianity, and to preserve it in its native Purity, free from all Superstition, but, after a strict Scrutiny, to admit nothing to belong to it, except what our Reason tells us is worthy of having God for its Author. And if be evident, that we can't discern whether any instituted Religion contains every Thing worthy, and nothing unworthy of a divine Original, except we can antecedently by our Reason discern what is, or is not worthy of having God for its Author; it necessarily follows, that natural and reveal'd Religion can't differ: Because whatever Reason shews to be worthy of having God for its Author, must belong to Natural Religion; and whatever Reason tells us is unworthy of having God for its Author, can never belong to the True Reveal'd Religion. 'Tis upon this very Plan, that I have endeavour'd to shew You wherein True and Genuine Christianity consists.

B. By the Reasoning of these Divines, Religion is the plainest Thing in the World: We, it seems, have nothing to do, but to examine what Notions are worthy of God, in Order to know his Will; but do they tell us, how we may certainly know what those Notions are?

A. ALL

A. ALL Divines of what Denomination soever agree, at least in Words, that God can't act arbitrarily in the Government of the World, or command Things for Commanding-sake ; but that all his Laws, being calculated for the Good of Mankind, carry with them the Marks of consummate Wisdom and Goodness. However, I shall mention two.

THE incomparable Archbishop *Tillotson* says, “ It would Vol. 6 p. 216.
 “ be little less than an horrid and dreadful Blasphemy, to
 “ say, that God, out of his sovereign Will and Pleasure,
 “ can do any Thing which contradicts the Nature of God,
 “ or the essential Perfections of the Deity ; or to imagine
 “ that the Pleasure and Will of the holy, just, and good
 “ God, is not always regulated, and determin'd by the es-
 “ sential and indispenfable Laws of Goodness, Holiness and
 “ Righteousness.

THE judicious Dr. *Scot* affirms, “ That to suppose the
 “ Will and Power of God is not perfectly subject to his Christ. Life,
Part. 1. Vol. 1.
p. 362.
 “ moral Perfections, is to suppose him a very defective and
 “ imperfect Being ; a lawless Will and Power being the
 “ greatest Defect in Nature ; wherefore to secure our Minds
 “ against all injurious Apprehensions of God; this is a most
 “ necessary Rule ; that we conceive him to be such a Being
 “ as can never will, nor act any Thing, but what his own
 “ essential Wisdom, Goodness and Justice do approve. —
 “ To affirm, he is not oblig'd to regulate himself by Wis-
 “ dom, Justice and Goodness ; or that he can do other-
 “ wise ; is to attribute to him a Power to will, or act
 “ foolishly, &c.

B. I shou'd readily approve what the Authors you quote have said, to shew the Reasonableness of the divine Law in every Instance ; were there not in Religion, Propositions to be believ'd, which are above Reason.

A. IF

A. If I do not understand the Terms of a Proposition ; or if they are inconsistent with one another ; or so uncertain, that I know not what Meaning to fix on them ; here is nothing told me, and consequently, no Room for Belief : But in all Cases, where I am capable of understanding a Proposition, 'tis Reason must inform me, whether 'tis certain, probable, or uncertain ; and even in Propositions relating to such Facts as we learn from Report, 'tis by our Reason alone, in comparing Circumstances, &c. that we must judge of their Probability. But,

ALTHO' designing Men very well know, that it's impossible to believe, when we know not *What it is* we are to believe ; or to believe an absurd, or contradictory Proposition ; yet they, because without Examination, People may be brought to fancy they believe such Things ; and it being their Interest to confound Mens Understandings, and prevent all Inquiry, craftily invented the Notion of believing Things above Reason : Here the Ravings of an *Enthusiast* are, on a Level with the Dictates of infinite Wisdom, and Nonsense render'd most sacred ; here a Contradiction is of great Use to maintain a Doctrine, that, when fairly stated, is not defensible ; because by talking backward and forward, by using obscure Terms, and taking Words in different Sences, they may easily amuse, and puzzle the People. On this Foundation *Transubstantiation* is built, and most of those mysterious Propositions, about which in former Days Christians so frequently murder'd each other. But,

If the Scripture was design'd to be understood, it must be within the Reach of human Understanding ; and consequently, it can't contain Propositions that are either above, or below human Understanding ; and if there are no Propositions

sitions in the Bible, but what have certain Ideas, by common Usage, annex'd to the Words; how can we suppose some are design'd to be understood, and some not? or know which are, and which are not? And indeed, if the End of God's giving a Revelation was to direct Mens Thoughts and Actions, it must (as necessary to that End) be deliver'd in such a Way, as is plain and easy to be understood, even by mean Capacities; and consequently, to suppose it dark and mysterious in any Part, is to represent it as unworthy of having God for its Author. And,

ONE wou'd think, that Men, when they knew they had Truth on their Side, wou'd speak after the plainest Manner, and not study to disguise it by unnatural Ways of expressing themselves; especially, when they reflect on others for so doing.

THE *Christians* said, The *Heathens* were conscious their Religion was absurd, by their having Recourse to allegorical, ænigmatical, and mysterious Explications; and consequently, that it cou'd not be design'd for the common People, incapable of such Explications; and that their Priests, instead of defending it, render'd it uncertain; since where the literal Sence is quitted, there may be many allegorical, or spiritual Sences, opposite to one another; and indeed, the wise Men among them, as *Tully*, &c. own'd as much.

NOR did the *Heathens* fail to retort the like Objection upon the *Christians*; and, in Truth, they equall'd, if not out-did them in allegorising away, not only the plainest Texts, but even Matter of Fact; which prov'd the Occasion of innumerable Heresies.

Dupin, speaking of the extravagant Opinions, which obtain'd among silly People in the primitive Times; says,
 “ They

Short Hist. of the Church Vol. 2, c. 4. "They sprang from the Principles of the Pagan Philosophers; and from the Mysteries, which crack-brain'd Men put on the History of the Old and New Testament, according to their Imaginations; the more extraordinary these Opinions were, the more did they relish, and the better did they like them; and those who invented them, publish'd them gravely as great Mysteries to the simple, who were all dispos'd to receive them." But cou'd any crack-brain'd Writers have found out more Mysteries in the Old and New Testament, than the primitive Fathers; (who interpreted them according to their Imaginations, and jumbld them together with that Pagan Philosophy they were educated in?) Or have publish'd their mysterious Reveries with greater Gravity to simple People, always dispos'd to receive what they do not understand?

THE same Author, speaking of St. Barnabas's Catholick Epistle in Answer to this Objection, "That it was incredible so great an Apostle, full of the Holy Ghost, and Colleague of St. Paul, shou'd be the Author of such forc'd Allegories, and extravagant Explications of Scripture; of those various Fables concerning Animals, with divers other Conceits of the like Nature; says, "They have but little Knowledge of the Jewish Nation, and of the primitive Christians educated in the Synagogues, who obstinately believe, that such Sort of Notions cou'd not proceed from them; that on the contrary, it was their very Character to turn the whole Scripture into Allegory. And,

Wake's Life of St. Barnabas, p. 73.

See 1 Cor. 10.

1. 4. Gal. 4.

21 Eph. 5.

31 Heb. 9. 8.

23. 24. & 10.

1. & c.

I think, none of our celebrated Writers reject this Epistle as spurious, because of the Allegories it abounds with: Our excellent Archbishop says, "Even St. Paul himself in his Epistles, receiv'd by us as Canonical

“ few Instances of this, which is so much found Fault with
 “ in *St. Barnabas*: As I might easily make appear from a
 “ Multitude of Passages out of them, were it needful for
 “ me to enlarge myself on a Point, which every One, who
 “ has read the *Scriptures* with any Care, cannot choose but
 “ have observ’d.” And those Christians *St. Paul* mentions,
 for believing the *Resurrection was past*, were, no Doubt,
 great Allegorists.

THE primitive Fathers exactly follow’d the Precedent set
 them by the Apostle *Barnabas*, and other Apostolical Men:

Clemens of Alexandria says, “ The Oeconomy of the Law, Stroma 1. 2. c. 19 p. 403 B
 “ is typical and prophetical; and that *Moses* and the Pro- l. 6 c. 15
 “ phets, wrote all in *Parables*.” So *Tertullian*, “ The p. 678, B. Adv. Marc. l.
 “ Law is spiritual and prophetical, and almost in all Points 2. c. 19.
 “ figurative.” And *Le Clerc* observes, that “ The Fathers Le Clerc’s Life of Cl. Alexan. Eng. Transl. p. 54. & Biblioth. Univer. To. 10. p. 236.
 “ did not content themselves with interpreting the Old Tes-
 “ tament allegorically, but they did the same as to the
 “ New.” — But because,

Origen was famous for this allegorical Method, and
 by Virtue of it esteem’d the greatest Champion of Christi-
 anity, next to the Apostles; and since what he says, was
 not only his own, but the Sense of the then Church, it
 will not be improper to cite him. “ If we adhere, *says he*, Hom. 7. in Levit. To. 2. fol. 73. C.
 “ to the Letter; or understand what is written in the Law
 “ of God, as the *Jews* do, in the common Acceptation of the
 “ Words, I blush to own, that God ever gave such Laws; for
 “ mere human Constitutions, as those of the *Romans*, *Athe-*
 “ *nians*, or *Lacedemonians*, will seem more reasonable and
 “ proper; but if the Law of God is to be understood in the
 “ Sense the Church teaches, then truly it exceeds all human
 “ Ordinances.” For which Reason he makes the allegorical
 Way of interpreting Scripture to be the Key of Knowledge;

and following the Letter of the Law, the direct Way to
Homi' 26 in to *Infidelity* and vain Superstition. *Literam sequentes in In-*
Mat 10: 30 E- *fidelitatem, & varias Superstitiones incurrunt.* And he ob-
Epist. ad Rom jects to *Marcion* the *Heretick*, that he was against the alle-
c. 2. fol. 147, gorical Way of interpreting Scripture.
G.-

B. Do not these Fathers suppose God either a weak Be-
 ing, who could not frame as wise Laws as Men; or else an
 ill-natur'd Being, who, in Order to puzzle Mankind, speaks
 in *Riddles* and *Mysteries*? What should we think of a *Law-*
yer, who said, he shou'd be asham'd of the Laws of his
 own Country, if taken in a literal Sense; but that there was
 an allegorical Sense which could one but hit, wou'd disco-
 ver profound Wisdom?

A. Thus the Fathers sufficiently acknowledg'd the Sove-
 reignty of Reason, in allegorising away Matters of Fact,
 that were in Truth, incapable of being allegoris'd; tho'
 that is but running into one unreasonable Thing, to get
 rid of another: And how can we depend on any Thing
 said in the Scripture, if we can't on its Facts? One
 wou'd think nothing was a plainer Fact, than that of
Lib. 4. c. 51. *Lot's* lying with his two Daughters, yet *St. Irenæus* alle-
per totum gorises That away; and is so fond of Allegorising, that
Lib. 4. c. 37 for the sake of it, he contradicts the Scripture, and says,
p. 336, col. 1. "The Harlot *Raab* entertain'd *three* Spies;" and had he
h. 36, c. "The Harlot *Raab* entertain'd *three* Spies;" and had he
Just. 2. 1, not made them three, he wou'd have been at a Loss,
 how to say as he does, that *this Harlot bid in her House,*
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. "How can we be edi-
Hem. 6 in fy'd, says *Origen*, in reading that so great a Patriarch
Gen. to 1. "as *Abraham*, not only ly'd to King *Abimelech*, but also
fol. 12, H, 13 "betray'd to him the Chastity of his Wife? What Instruc-
A. "tions can we reap from the Wife of so great a Patriarch,
 "if we think she was expos'd to be debauch'd by her Hus-
 band's

“band’s Contrivance. Let the *Jews* believe such Things,
“and those with them, who are greater Friends to the Let-
“ter than to the Spirit.

HE asserts, “That there are even in the Gospel Things Hom. 6. in 1/2. fol. 102.
“said, which, according to the Letter, or taken in their literal
“Sense, are mere Falsities, or Lies; as where our Saviour says,
“*He that believeth in me, the Works that I do, shall be do*
“*also; and greater Works than these shall be do.* John xiv.
“xii, &c.” which, he shews, was not verify’d literally, but
“spiritually. And,

“THAT it was Want of Knowledge in the Scriptures, to Orig. contra Celf. l. 6. p. 310, 311. See Philocal. c. 1. p. 12.
“think, that God spent six real Days in the Work of the
“Creation.

HE desires any one to shew, “how the Truth of the Gos- Tom. 10. in Joh. p. 150, D. E.
“pels can be maintain’d, or their seeming Contrarities clear’d
“by any other than the anagogical Method; which he affirms
“necessary for that Purpose.

HE says, “The pair of *Turtle-Doves*, or two young *Pid-* Hom. 14. in Luc. p. 104, B. to. 3.
“geons, offer’d for Jesus, were not such as we see with our
“carnal Eyes; not *Birds*, such as fly in the Air; but something
“divine and august, beyond human Contemplation, &c.

If You desire to be more plentifully furnish’d with In- Cap. 1. p. 12. & seqq. Edit. Cantab. 1658.
stances of the like Nature with those abovemention’d, con-
sult the *Philocalia* of *Origen*.

ST. *Austin*, a Man of the greatest Authority of all the Contra Men- dacium, c. 10. p. 44, 45. to.
Fathers, says, “We must not take the Story of *Jacob’s*
“cheating his Father, by personating his Brother *Esau*, lite- 4
“rally, lest the Scripture should seem to encourage *Lying*;

and speaking of Jesus cursing the *Fig-Tree*, says, *Hoc fac-* Serm. 77. 4. 2. de Gen.
tum, nisi figuratum stultum invenitur. And he, with the rest
of the Fathers, not only most unnaturally allegorises away
the History of the Fall, but even of the whole Creation; Contra Mani- che. c. 17. & d.

Tom. 3. lib. Imperf. De Gen. ad Lit. c. 7. &c. and says, "The whole World was created in an Instant;" and tho' there is not one Word about Angels in the Text, yet this angelical Doctor makes Part of the six Days Labour relate to the Creation of Angels.

B. BUT how could he account for God's instituting the Sabbath, upon his resting from his six Days Labour, if all Things were created in an Instant?

Lib. 2. de Gen. contra Manich. c. 17. p. 841. B. To 1.

A. How happy he was in allegorising, You may judge from his explaining that Passage of *Genesis*, iii. xiv. where the *Latin* Version which he follow'd, runs thus; *Upon thy Breast, and upon thy Belly shalt thou go; and Dust shalt thou eat all the Days of thy Life.* By the *Breast*, says he, is to be understood *Pride*; by the *Belly*, the *Lusts of the Flesh*; and by that which is added, *Dust shalt thou eat*, is meant *Curiosity*, which extends only to Things temporal and earthly; and by *Curiosity*, he means *Avarice*. And,

Lib. de Noe & Arca. 27.

ST. *Ambrose* will not allow the *Rainbow* to be the *Bow*, which God plac'd in the *Clouds*; and saith, "Far be it from us to call this *God's Bow*; for this *Bow*, which is call'd *Iris*, is seen indeed, in the *Day*, but never appears in the *Night*:" For which weighty Reason, he substitutes in its Room, a strange, allegorical *Bow*, out of his own Imagination.

Origen contra Celsum, l. 7. p. 347.

IF the Fathers could allegorise away the most stubborn Matters of Fact, they could have no Difficulty in allegorising away any other Matter, where the Words are capable of various Senses: One would think, it was difficult to find out an allegorical Meaning to this Text, *O Daughter of Babylon, happy is he, who taketh, and dashes thy little Ones against the Stones*; yet nothing is too hard for *Origen*, who assures us, that the Text intends, *The Man who dashes his vicious Thoughts against the solid Rock of Reason.*

AND

AND indeed, the Fathers have so turn'd, and twist'd the Scripture, with a pious Intention to make it speak nothing but what they thought agreeable to Reason; that they have render'd it like *Aristotle's Materia prima; nec quid, nec quale, nec quantum, nec aliquid eorum de quibus ens denominatur*: For by making the Scripture, in so many Places, say one Thing, and mean another, they have destroy'd its Certainty; since as *Le Clerc* observes, "If, according to this Life of Clem. Alexand. p. 54 55. Engl. Transl. & Bibl. Univer. To. 10. p. 236. 237. Method, the sacred Writers had said quite another Thing than what they said, Or, if you will the quite contrary, yet One might find as good Sence in them; as those that will try it will presently observe. — Therefore the Christians, and the Jews wou'd have done much better to keep close to the Letter, than to use so uncertain a Method, to defend the holy Scripture against the Pagans.

B. ALL the Fathers do not allegorise like *Origen*; *Justin Martyr*, for Instance, asserts, that the Threatning, that *In the Day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely dye*, was literally fulfill'd, in that *Adam* did not live out a thousand Years; which, with God, is but one Day: But to go no further than the Story of *Abraham's* prostituting his Wife; *St. Ambrose*, to justify *Abraham's* Conduct, roundly asserts, Adultery to be no Crime before the giving of the Law by *Moses*. And *St. Austin* makes Adultery still lawful, if Husband and Wife consent. *St. Jerom*, indeed, runs into the other Extream, and approves the Conduct of those, who kill'd themselves, to preserve their Chastity. But the most eloquent *St. Chrysostom* enlarges very much in Commendation of *Abraham* and *Sarah*, and says, "Tho' no-
" thing gives a Husband more Uneasiness, than to ima-
" gine his Wife has to do with another; yet this just Man
" did what he cou'd, even to accomplish the Act of Adul-

" tery,

“ tery. — And adds, that *Sarah* too, (whom he sets as
 “ a Pattern for all Marry’d Women) accepted the Proposal
 “ very courageously ; and then crys out, Who can enough ad-
 “ mire this Readiness to obey her Husband ? Who can suf-
 “ ficiently celebrate the Praises of *Sarah*, who, after so
 “ long Continence, and at her great Age, readily consented to
 “ this Act of Adultery, and to let the *Barbarian* have the
 “ Use of her Body, to save her Husband ?

A. MIGHT not those Fathers as well have allegoris’d,
 as talk’d thus absurdly ? ’Tis chiefly owing to the *Pa-
 pists* taking some Words in a literal Sense, relating to the
eating the Flesh, and drinking the Blood of the Son of Man,
 that makes them to be of a different Religion from the
Protestants ; and tho’ two Parties may agree, in taking
 the same Words in an allegorical Sense ; yet by allegori-
 sing them differently, they may be of different Religions :
 By allegorising some Texts, the *Jews* have made the
Messiah a Temporal Prince ; the *Christians* a Spiritual One.
 Mr. *Whiston* must think there are no Words so plain, but
 are capable of being allegoris’d ; since, he supposes the
 Catholick Church has all along allegorised plain Love-
 Songs, between *Solomon* and one of his Mistresses, into spi-
 ritual Hymns between Christ and his Spouse, the Church.
 And what Dr. *South* must have thought of the *Revela-
 tions*, I leave you to judge, when he does not scruple to
 call it a *mysterious, extraordinary Book ; which, perhaps,*
the more ’tis study’d, the less ’tis understood ; as generally
finding a Man crack’d, or making him so. And had not the
Mahometan Divines had the Knack of allegorising Non-
 sence, Fools, and frantick Persons wou’d not have been
 had in such Honour and Reverence among the *Musselmens*,
 only because their *Revelations and Enthusiasms transported*
 them

See Supplem.
 to his Essay,
 p. initio.

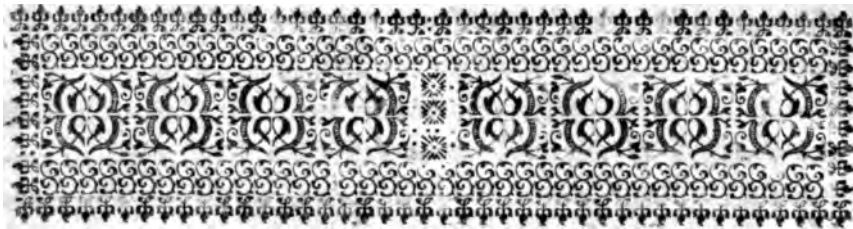
South’s Serm.
 Vol. 2. p. 457.

RICANI’s pref.
 State of the
 Ottom. Emp.
 B. 2. C. 4.

them out of the ordinary Temper of Humanity. Therefore, upon the whole, I must needs say, Happy is the Man, who is so far, at least, directed by the *Law of Reason*, and the *Religion of Nature*, as to suffer no Mysteries, or unintelligible Propositions, no Allegories, no Hyperboles, no Metaphors, Types, Parables, or Phrases of an uncertain Signification, to confound his Understanding. And certainly, the common Parent of Mankind is too good and gracious, to put the Happiness of *All* his Children on any other Doctrines, than such as plainly shew themselves to be the Will of God, even to the ignorant and illiterate; if they have but Courage and Honesty to make use of their Reason: Otherwise the Scripture wou'd not be plain in all necessary Things; even to *Babes and Sucklings*.

B. You suppose then, that the Bulk of Mankind are taught by God himself, to know what Religion comes from him; even tho' they want Letters, to make 'em capable of understanding those external Proofs, on which all traditional Religions do, and must depend.





C H A P. XIII.

The Bulk of Mankind, by their Reason, must be able to distinguish between Religion and Superstition; otherwise they can never extricate themselves from that Superstition they chance to be educated in.

A.  RELIGION either does not concern the Majority, as being incapable of forming a Judgment about it; or it must carry such internal Marks of its Truth, as Men of mean Capacity are able to discover; or else notwithstanding the infinite Variety of Religions, All who do not understand the Original Languages their traditional Religions are written in, which is all Mankind, a very few excepted, are alike bound in all Places to pin their Faith on their Priests, and believe in Men, who have an Interest to deceive them; and who have seldom fail'd to do so, when Occasion serves.

CAN People, if incapable by their Reason to distinguish Truth from Falshood, have any Thing more to plead for the Truth of their Religion, than that they believe it to be
the

the True Religion ; because their Priests, who are hir'd to maintain it, tell them it was a long While ago reveal'd to certain Persons, who, as they, on their *Priestly* Words, assure them, were too wise to be impos'd on themselves ; and too honest to impose on others : And that no Change cou'd have been made in their Religion in After-times ; the Care Men have of their own Souls, as well as their natural Affections for Posterity, obliging them from Generation to Generation, to hand down their Religion just as they receiv'd it : And that it was morally impossible, Innovations shou'd creep in, since it wou'd be the highest Folly in any to attempt to introduce new Doctrines, as a Tradition receiv'd from their Ancestors ; when all must know they had receiv'd no such Tradition. As This is all, the Bulk of Mankind, if they are not capable of judging from the Doctrines themselves of their Truth, can say for their Religion ; so they, in all Places, make use of this Argument ; and with equal Confidence aver, That, tho' all other traditionary Religions are full of gross Falshoods, and most absurd Notions, which their Priests impudently impose on them as divine Truths ; yet our own Priests are such faithful Representers of Things, that One may as well question the Truth of all History, as the Truth of Things believ'd on their Authority. Priests of other Religions, we know, will lie for Interest, and conscious that their traditional Religion will not bear Examination, guard it with penal Laws ; but we can never suspect, that our own Priests, tho' they take the same Methods, act on the same Motives.

THIS boasted Argument, in which Men of all Religions so much triumph, if it proves any Thing, wou'd prove there never was, nor cou'd be any false Religion,

H h

either

either in whole, or part ; because Truth being before Falseness, and Mens Ancestors having once possess'd it, no Change cou'd afterward ever happen : Whereas, on the contrary, tho' there have been at Times great Numbers of traditional Religions, yet as far as it appears, no One of them has long remain'd the same ; at least, in such Points as were merely founded on Tradition.

I see no Middle, but that we must either own, that there are such internal Marks fix'd to every Part of the true Religion, as will enable the Bulk of Mankind to distinguish it from all false Religions ; or else that all traditionary Religions are upon a Level : Since those, who, in every Country, are hir'd to maintain them, will not fail to assert, they have all external Marks ; such as *Uninterrupted Traditions, incontest'd Miracles, Confession of Adversaries, Number of Profelites, Agreement among themselves* ; and all those other external Arguments, that the *Papists* and *Mahometans* set so high a Value on. In this Case, what can the common People do, who understand not a Word of the Language, their Religion, and its external Proofs are writ in, but be of the Religion in which they are educated ; especially, if nothing is suffer'd to be publish'd, which may, in the least, tend to make them question its Truth ; and all other Religions are represented as full of the grossest Absurdities.

HAD the People of *Rome*, in the primitive Times of Christianity, been govern'd by external Marks, none of them had quitted their old Religion, which had every external Mark proper to recommend it ; and under which they were so bless'd, as to become Masters of the best Part of the known World. But,

BECAUSE

BECAUSE this is a Point, wherein the greatest Part of Mankind are, at all Times, nearly concern'd, I shall beg Leave to mention, tho' it be somewhat long, what Mr. *Lock* says on this Head.

" HAVE the Bulk of Mankind no other Guide, but
 " Accident, and blind Chance, to conduct them to their
 " Happiness, or Misery? Are the current Opinions, and
 " licensed Guides of every Country sufficient Evidence and
 " Security to every Man, to venture his greatest Con-
 " cernments on; nay, his everlasting Happiness, or Mi-
 " sery? Or, can those be the certain and infallible Ora-
 " cles and Standards of Truth, which teach one Thing
 " in *Christianity*, and another in *Turkey*? Or, shall a
 " poor Country-man be eternally happy, for having the
 " Chance to be born in *Italy*; or a Day-Labourer be
 " unavoidably lost, because he had the ill Luck to be
 " born in *England*? How ready some Men may be to
 " say some of these Things, I will not here examine;
 " but this I am sure, that Men must allow one or other
 " of these to be true; (let them chuse which they please.)
 " or else grant, that GOD has furnished Men with Fa-
 " culties sufficient to direct them in the Way they shou'd
 " take, if they will but seriously employ them that Way,
 " when their ordinary Vocations allow them the Leisure.—
 " There can't be a more dangerous Thing to rely on than
 " the Opinion of others, nor more likely to mislead One;
 " since there is much more Falseness and Error among Men
 " than Truth and Knowledge: And if the Opinions and Per-
 " suasions of others, whom we know, and think well of, be
 " a Ground of Assent, Men have Reason to be *Heathens* in
 " *Japan*, *Mahometans* in *Turkey*, *Papists* in *Spain*, *Protes-*
 " *tants* in *England*, and *Lutherans* in *Sueden*.

Of human
 Underst. l. 4.
 c. 19. Sect. 3.
 p. 399. Edit. 2.

Ib. l. 4. c. 25.
 Sect. 6. Edit.

WAS there a Set of Priests, on whose Authority the common People were every where to depend for their religious Sentiments, they must be known by some plain, external Marks : To say the People must follow those Priests that are in the right, is to suppose People must judge what is right ; and then judge (if that concern'd them) whether any Set of Priests are in the right ; and if Men can't believe, when they see no Reason for believing, what Reason can the Bulk of Mankind have to prefer one Religion before a Number of Others, on the Account of such Things, as, upon Priestly Authority, are believ'd to belong to every One of them ; such as *Visions, Dreams, Trances, Extacies, Inspirations, Conference with Spirits, traditionary Report about Miracles, &c.* And shou'd the Chance of Education throw Men into the *True* traditionary Religion, yet considering its Style is not very exact, there being generally more express'd than is meant ; and Things of the greatest Consequence are often so treated, as that Men can't from thence perceive the Nature and Extent of their Duty ; and even Precepts of the greatest Moment are sometimes so far from being deliver'd plainly and simply, that they are express'd after a general, undetermin'd, nay, hyperbolical Manner ; so that even in this Case, there's a Necessity for the common People to have Recourse to the Reason of Things.

ARE not the unlearned wholly unacquainted with those *Keys of Solution* (as they are call'd) which the learned have such frequent Recourse to ; such as those of a *Transposition of Words, or Clauses, Errors of Copies, various Readings, various Meanings of the same Word, Punctuation, Taking away, or Adding of the Negative Particle ;*
Allu-

Allusion to Customs, Consideration of the Matter in hand, Exaggeration, Interrogation, Parenthesis, literal Sense, figurative Sense; Want of exactness in the sacred Writers, Prudence in concealing some Things, or in complying with some Opinions prevailing in their Times; Condescension to Pagans or Jews; using such Ideas as prevail'd in such a Religion; Prejudication in the Hearers, Answers suitable to their Needs, rather than to their Queries; compendious Expressions, Phraseology of that Time, the Author's Nation, or native Country; Parallel Passages, Precepts peculiar to the Apostles, Advices to Perfection, Censures against certain Hereticks, the Circumstances of the Subject, the Scope of the Author, what goes before, and what follows; the Barrenness of the Hebrew Tongue; and consequently, its Ambiguity, its particular Idioms, the various Senses of the same Verb, in different Conjugations; the Want of certain Ways of Expression us'd in other Tongues; the sublime, and metaphorical Expressions most frequent in the Oriental Languages; the Imitation of the Hebrew Idiom in the LXX Version; and in the Original Text of the New Testament Greek of the Synagogue, &c.

THE Bulk of Mankind being incapable of Metaphysical Speculations, and their Understandings giv'n them to discern those Rules of Action which God prescribes them, he has, no doubt, adjust'd one to the other; and consequently, the Simplicity, the Reasonableness, the Conveniency and Usefulness of these Rules, point them out to be the Will of God, to Men in all Places, and Conditions of Life; but to carry Things further, can only serve the Designs of ill Men, who have taken an Occasion from thence to abuse their Credulity to the vilest Purposes.

CAN, for Instance, the common People, who understand not a Word of the Language, the Jewish Books are writ in, be

be better Judges than the *Jews* themselves of the Meaning of their own Books; and of their own Prophets speaking in their own Language? Or, are the common People capable of judging of the innumerable Disputes among *Christians*; if those likewise depend, not on the Reason of Things, but on the critical Understanding of Books, written in dead Languages; nay, what do they know of the distinguishing Doctrines of their own Churches? They, indeed, on all Sides, know, whom their Leaders wou'd have them hate, but little, or nothing of those Opinions, which divide their Leaders.

B. Is there any Divine of Note, who makes Revelation thus difficult to be understood by the ignorant, and unlearned?

A. I shall mention one, against whom You have no Exception, who represents it thus obscure, even to the learned. Is not Bishop *Taylor* (highly esteem'd for his devotional, as well as polemical Works) a competent Judge in this Matter? And he (summing up, and that very briefly, what he had spent several Chapters to prove at large) says, " Since
Polem. Works p. 452. " there are so many Copies with infinite Varieties of Reading; since a various Interpunction, a Parenthesis, a Letter, an Accent may much alter the Sense; since some Places have divers literal Senses, many have spiritual, mystical and allegorical Meanings; since there are so many Tropes, Metonimies, Ironies, Hyperboles, Proprieties and Improproprieties of Language, whose Understanding depends upon such Circumstances, that it is almost impossible to know the proper Interpretation; now that the Knowledge of such Circumstances, and particular Stories is irrecoverably lost: Since there are some
It. p. 453. " Mysteries, which, at the best Advantage of Expression
 " are

“ are not easy to be apprehended, and whose Explication,
 “ by reason of our Imperfections, must needs be dark,
 “ sometimes unintelligible. And lastly, since those ordi-
 “ nary Means of expounding Scripture, as searching the
 “ Originals, Conference of Places, Parity of Reason, Ana-
 “ logy of Faith, are all dubious, uncertain, and very falli-
 “ ble: He that is the wisest, and by Consequence, the
 “ likeliest to expound truest, in all Probability of Rea-
 “ son, will be very far from Confidence; because every
 “ One of them, and many more, are like so many De-
 “ grees of Improbability and Incertainty, all depressing our
 “ Certainty of finding out Truth in such Mysteries, and
 “ amidst so many Difficulties.

AND in another Place, “ The Obscurity of some *Quest-* *Ib. p. 521.*
 “ tions, the Niceties of some Articles, the Intricacy of some
 “ Revelations, the Variety of human Understandings, the
 “ Winding of Logick, the Tricks of Adversaries, the Sub-
 “ tility of Sophisters, the Engagement of Educations, Personal
 “ Affections, the portentous Number of Writers, the Infi-
 “ nity of Authorities, the Vastness of some Arguments,
 “ consisting in an Ennumeration of many Particulars, the
 “ Incertainty of Others, the several Degrees of Probability,
 “ the Difficulties of Scripture, the Invalidity of Probation,
 “ of Tradition, the Opposition of all exterior Arguments
 “ to one another, and their open Contestation, the publick
 “ Violence done to Authors and Records, the private Arts
 “ and Supplantings, the Falsifyings, the indefatigable In-
 “ dustry of some Men to abuse all Understandings, and all
 “ Persuasions into their own Opinions: These, and a Thou-
 “ sand more, have made it impossible for any Man in
 “ so great a Variety of Matter, not to be deceiv’d.” And
 I might add in Confirmation of the Bishop’s Sentiments, and
 de-

demonstrate too, were it not endless to go through Particulars, that there's scarce a Text, except in Things of their own Nature evident, where Commentators do not differ. Whether these Considerations alone, be not a sufficient Reason for the unlearned to adhere to those plain, simple Truths the Light of Nature dictates, I leave you to judge?

AND do not other Divines, in Effect, say the same, when they make Religion not to be implanted in human Nature; but an Art so far above the Capacity of common People, that it requires great Learning and Labour to be competently skill'd in it; and tell us, that they, who have spent their Time in studying it, can't have too much Honour, or too great Rewards given them for deciding for the People, Points of Religion, as the Common Law Judges do Points of Property; and that People justly incur the dreadful *Anathema* pronounc'd in Synods and Councils, against those who refuse to submit to their Decisions; and that 'tis the Duty of the Magistrate to see their Decrees put in Execution.

A Right in Priests, whether in, or out of *Convocations*, to judge, and determine for the People, what they shall believe and profess, supposes it a Duty in them so to believe, and so to profess; and consequently, that the Religion of the *Laitie* consists in believing in their Priests; and that whatever they decree, is to be the Rule of their Actions.

B. This is too severe; they only claim a Power of interpreting the Laws of Christ, not of making new Laws themselves.

A. THERE'S only a verbal Difference between a Law-maker, and a sovereign Interpreter of Laws, to whose Interpretation all are oblig'd to submit; so that ever since the Council of — People have been taught to renounce both Natural and Reveal'd Religion; and become Priests-
Wor-

Worshippers, and to have a divine Faith in their Dictates; and indeed, so they ought, if these Priests had, as they claim, a judicial Power to determine of Mens Condition hereafter; and thereby make God a meer Executioner of their Sentences, by which they bind, or loose Mens Sins to Eternity.

As this Notion carries with it the highest Blasphemy and Idolatry, so I think it is treated too gently by Mr. *Chillingworth*, in saying, “ This presumptuous imposing of the *Chillingworth's*
Relig. of Protest. Part 1.
c. 4. Sect. 16.
p. 152. Edit. Senses of Men upon the Words of God, the special Senses of Men upon the general Words of God, and laying them upon Mens Consciences together under the equal Penalty of Death and Damnation; This vain Conceit, that we can speak of the Things of God better than the Words of God; This Deifying our own Interpretations, and tyrannous Inforcing them upon others; This Restraining of the Word of God from that Latitude and Generality; and the Understanding of Men from that Liberty, wherein Christ and the Apostles left them; is, and hath been the only Fountain of all the *Schisms* of the Church, and that which makes them immortal; the common Incendiary of *Christendom*, and that which tears in Pieces, not the Coat, but the Bowels and Members of Christ; *Ridente Turca, nec dolente Judæo.*

IN short, True Religion can't but be plain, simple, and natural, as design'd for all Mankind, adapted to every Capacity, and suited to every Condition and Circumstance of Life; and if it be render'd otherwise, is it not owing to those, who have made it their Business to puzzle Mankind, and render plain Things obscure; in Order to get the Consciences, and consequently, the Properties of the People at their Disposál; and to be in a Manner ador'd, notwithstanding

ing the grossest Immoralities, as the sole Dispensers of such Things, as no Ways relate to the Good of the Community; and to destroy all that will not comply with their pernicious Designs, as Enemies of God, and his Holy Church? And;

THO' the Clergy have taken all possible Methods for a blind Submission, and a forc'd Uniformity, yet they have not been able to hinder *Christians* from being endlessly divided, even in what they call *Fundamentals*; and tho' no one Sect, as far as I can find, have ventur'd to give us a compleat Set of their *Fundamentals*; yet all Sects unanimously own, that those Things which are necessary to the Salvation of *Christians*, must be so plain, as that all *Christians*, even those of the meanest Capacities, may apprehend them. Would not One think, that a little honest Reflection shou'd carry them further, and make them see, that it is inconsistent with the universal and unlimited Goodness of the common Parent of Mankind, not to make That which is necessary for the Salvation of all Men, so plain, as that all Men may know it; tho' One wou'd be apt to think, that by the Number and Oddness of those Things, which in most Churches Divines have made necessary to Salvation, they were more zealous to damn others than to save themselves; or at least, that they thought there was no Room in Heaven for any, but Men of their own narrow Principles. But,

LET me ask these charitable Gentlemen, Whether the Happiness of Others wou'd make *Christians* unhappy? Or, what Prejudice it will be to them, to suppose *God is no Respector of Persons*; but that all may come to him, who believe that *he will reward those in all Nations, and at all Times, who have diligently sought him?*

NATURAL Religion, which is of the greatest Importance to Mankind, and is a perpetual standing Rule for Men of the meanest, as well as highest Capacity, carries its own Evidence with it, those internal, inseparable Marks of Truth; but can that be said of any Religion, which depends on Tradition? Does not That want foreign Aid and Assistance? Ought we not to be certain, that the first Propagators of it cou'd not be impos'd on themselves, or wou'd not impose on Others? Or in other Words, were infallible, and impeccable? But since Numbers have taken their Reveries for divine Inspirations, ought we not to have certain Marks to distinguish one from the other? Nor is this alone sufficient; for if evil Beings can impress Notions in Mens Minds as strongly as good Beings, and cause Miracles to be done in Confirmation of them; is there any Way to know, to which of the two Notions thus impress'd are owing, but from their Nature and Tendency; or those internal Marks of Wisdom and Goodness, by which they plainly shew themselves to be Part of Natural Religion? If so, can external Proofs carry us further than the internal Proofs do? But,

'Tis not enough to be certain, these Men were not impos'd on; we must be as certain, they wou'd on no Occasion whatever impose on Others: Or in other Words, were not Men of like Passions and Infirmities with other Mortals. Does not the Scripture give very many Instances of inspir'd Persons as much govern'd by their Passions, as uninspir'd? Was not *Abraham*, tho' a Prophet, and so dear to God, that he wou'd not destroy a neighbouring Town without Gen. 18. 15. acquainting him with it; guilty of an incestuous Marriage, his Wife being his Sister by the Father's Side? And — 20. 12. did he not endeavour to betray her Chastity to two Kings — 12. 19.

Gen. 20. 2. in disowning her to be his Wife, by which Conduct, he
 — 12. 16. got from one of them, who *entreated him well for her-
 Sake, Men and Maid-Servants, Sheep, Oxen, Asses, and Ca-
 — 20. 16. mels*; and from the other, *a Thousand Pieces of Silver*, be-
 sides, *Sheep, Oxen, Men and Women-Servants*? And imme-
 — 15. 6, 8. diately after, *his Faith was counted to him for Righte-
 ousness*, did he not doubt of God's Promise, till God spoke
 — 12. 13. to him *in a deep Sleep*?

Was not *David*, tho' a Prophet, and a Man after God's
 own Heart, guilty of many enormous Crimes, from the
 1 Sam. 25. 22. Time he design'd to have murder'd all the Males in *Nabal's*
 Family, because he wou'd not pay Contributions to him,
 — 22. 2. and those Men, who out of Debt, Discontent and Distress
 join'd him? tho' *Nabal*, by so doing, might have incur'd
 the Fate of those Priests, from whom, *David*, by several
 — 21. 6, 9. Fallhoods, got both *Shew-Bread*, and *Goliath's Sword*.
 What cou'd be more treacherous, than his invading Peo-
 ple, that were at least, in Peace, if not Allies of the King
 — 27. 8, — of *Gath*, to whom he fled for Safety; and having neither
 12. sav'd Man or Woman alive to bring Tydings, told his ge-
 neral Protector, he had been making an In-road into
Judea?

In a Word, (not to mention his Treatment of *Uriah*,
 which no brave Man can think of without Horror,) did he
 not leave the World in a very unforgiving Temper, when
 the last Thing he commanded his Son *Solomon* was, to put
 1 Kings 2. *Shimei* to Death; tho' he had sworn before the Lord, that he
 8, 9. wou'd not put him to Death, and that he shou'd not dye?
 1 Sam. 19. 23.

SOLOMON, tho' inspir'd with Wisdom from Above, and
 had Conferences with God himself, yet his Passion for
 Women, made him guilty of gross Idolatry. And not to
 multiply Instances; we find one Man of God lying to ano-
 ther

ther Man of God in the Name of God ; purely for the Pleasure of making him *eat Bread, and drink Water with him*, 1 Kings 13. And if we go to the New Testament, 'tis plain, by what^{18.} our Saviour says to those, who *had prophesy'd, and cast out Devils, and done many wonderful Works in his Name, Depart from me, ye that work Iniquity*; that neither Prophecies, nor Miracles are absolute Securities for Men to depend on. Nay, do we not find one of the Apostles, tho' he, with the rest, had the Power of doing Miracles, even to the *Raising of the dead*, betraying his Master for the paltry Sum of thirty Pieces of Silver ? And the other Apostles not only fled, and deserted him ; but the chief of them *persecute him*, as often as he was ask'd about his being one of his Followers ; and he, as well as *Barnabas*, Gal. 2. 13. was afterwards guilty of a mean Piece of Diffimulation. And *Paul* and *Barnabas* had such a *sharp Contention*, tho' Acts 15. 39. about a very indifferent Matter, as to cause a Separation : And even *St. Paul* says, *The Good that I would, I do not* ; Rom. 7. 19. *but the Evil which I would not, that I do. — But I see another Law in my Members, warring against the Law of my Mind, and bringing me into Captivity to the Law of Sin, which is in my Members.* And a great deal more to the same Purpose.

Do not these Instances, tho' many more might be added, plainly shew, that inspir'd Persons, whether Prophets or Apostles, are subject to the same Passions, even to dissembling and lying, as other Men ? And that we sin against that Reason, which was given us to distinguish between Good and Evil, Religion and Superstition, if we do not by it examine all Doctrines whatsoever, and by whomsoever deliver'd ? But supposing Prophets and Apostles impeccable as well as infallible ; yet what Certainty can People have .

have, that those Things which were taught by them have been faithfully convey'd down for many Generations together by Men, who were far from being infallible, or impeccable? So that here, certainly, they ought to make use of their Reason, in judging of all Doctrines thus convey'd. Admitting Tradition has been a faithful Conveyancer, yet how can the common People be certain the Scripture has been truly translated? But, granting even That; yet since most Texts have vastly vary'd, and sometimes contrary Interpretations, and the literal Sense very often *kills*, how can they be confident they do not mistake their Meaning, except the Reason of Things makes it evident? But supposing no such Uncertainty in the Meaning of Texts, yet since the Scripture contains some Precepts, which are occasional, obliging only certain Persons, upon certain Occasions, and in certain Circumstances; and others that are of an eternal Obligation, and makes no Distinction in delivering them; can Men, even the most learned, have any other Way of knowing one from the other, but from the Nature of the Precepts; and that those only are of an eternal Obligation, which are founded on the eternal Reason of Things; and which wou'd eternally oblige, whether deliver'd in Scripture, or not? And,

LET me further add, That to make external Revelation of any Use, must we not, as I have already observ'd, be able to determine, whether God is oblig'd to act, as he declares in it he will do? And in Order to settle this important Point, which Revelation itself can never do, must not our Reason tell us, that infinite Wisdom can have no Commands, but what are founded on the unalterable

terable Reason of Things? And if God cou'd command at one Time for Commanding-sake in any one Point, he might do so in all Points, and Times; and consequently, that an arbitrary Will, which might change every Moment, wou'd govern all Things? And can they, who plead that their external Revelation is the unchangeable Will of God, any otherwise do it, but by having Recourse to the Nature of God, by which they *can't* but perceive, that the Will of God before, as well as since any external Revelation, must be as immutable as God himself, as being founded on the eternal Reason of Things? So that they who make the Will of God, whether reveal'd by himself, or by any Messenger, not to be unchangeably the same, destroy all possible Proof, that any external Revelation cou'd be, or at least, continue to be the Will of God. Thus you see, that take what *Hypothesis* You please, yet You can prove nothing to be his Will, but what the Nature of God, and the Nature of Things point out to all Men, who dare use their Reason, to be his Will, his immutable Will.

AMONG the numerous Answerers of the *Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, Mr. Chandler is deservedly reckon'd to stand in the foremost Rank; and this judicious Divine says, that "Natural Religion is the only *Chandler's* Foundation, upon which Revelation can be supported, *dic. to Sermon.*
 "and which must be understood, before any Man is ca- *preach'd in*
 "pable of judging either of the Nature and Evidence of *the Old Jury.*
 "Christianity: And I am persuaded, *says he*, that 'tis to *P. 8.*
 "the Want of a due Knowledge of the first Principles of
 "all Religion, those Mistakes about the Christian are
 "owing, that have obscur'd the Simplicity of it, and pre-
 "judiced many against entertaining, and believing it. —
 "If

1b. p. 9, 10. 11. " If Natural Religion is not Part of the Religion of Christ,
 " 'tis scarce worth While to enquire at all what his Re-
 " ligion is. If it be, then the preaching Natural Religion
 " is preaching Christ. — The Religion of Christ must
 " be understood, before it can, or ought to be believ'd ;
 " and that it must be proved to be a consistent, and ra-
 " tional Religion, before they can be under any Obligation
 " to receive it.

" AND, indeed, why shou'd not every Man insist up-
 " on those Things? The only Consequence that I can
 " imagine can flow from it is, not that the Cause of Chri-
 " stianity will suffer, which will stand the Test of the
 " most impartial Inquiry, but that the rigid Directors of
 " the Faith and Consciences of Men will lose their Autho-
 " rity, and human Schemes and Creeds, that have been
 " set up in the Room of Christianity, will fall into the
 " Contempt they so justly deserve.

" — 'Tis my hearty Prayer to *the Father of Lights*,
 " and *the God of Truth*, that all human Authority in Mat-
 " ters of Faith, may come to a full End ; and that every
 " One, who hath Reason to direct him, and a Soul to
 " save, may be his own Judge in every Thing that con-
 " cerns his eternal Welfare, without any prevailing Re-
 " gard to the Dictates of fallible Men, or Fear of their
 " peevish, and impotent Censures." And in this Prayer,
 I believe, every honest Man will join.

THE Reverend and Judicious Mr. *Bullock*, in summing
 up what I have been endeavouring to prove at large, says,
 Serm. p. 3, 4. " A Revelation coming from God, unless it cou'd be
 " known to be such, is in Effect the same, as having none
 " at all. — Shall a Man, *says he*, embrace the first Reli-
 " gion that offers itself to him, and without seeking any
 " fur-

“ further, stick close to the Principles of his Education ?
 “ If this were safe, then all the contradictory Notions that
 “ are in the World, would be equally safe and true ; and
 “ there could be no such Thing as a false Religion, or
 “ the Spirit of Error any where : But this will not be ad-
 “ mitted. Is Truth, then, confin’d to any certain Country,
 “ or to any particular Set of Men ? No : But if it were,
 “ still there would remain this Difficulty, to be assur’d to
 “ what Country, or to what Sort of Men it belong’d. If
 “ this were all the Rule we had to go by, every Man
 “ (no Doubt) would be partial to his own Country, and
 “ to those Men he is best acquainted with. And so the
 “ Principles of Education must prevail every where, in-
 “ stead of true Religion. ”

In Answer to these, and such like Objections, he says,
 “ We are well assur’d, that God is the Author of our *Serm. p. 18.*
 “ Beings, and all our Faculties ; and we cannot but ac-^{19.}
 “ knowledge, that our Understanding is the most excellent
 “ Faculty he has given us. It is in That we excel the
 “ Beasts that perish ; and it was plainly given us with
 “ this Intent, that by a due Use and Application there-
 “ of we might discern Truth from Error ; that which is
 “ just and fit to be done, or observed by us, from that
 “ which is not. — Should we, therefore, admit any
 “ Thing, as a Revelation coming from him, which con-
 “ tradicts the evident Dictates of our Reason, we sacrifice
 “ one Revelation, that which God gave us with our very
 “ Beings, to make Way for another, which is inconsistent
 “ with it. It is in Effect admitting, that the Judgment of
 “ our own Minds is in no Case to be depended upon ;
 “ that the Faculties thereof, the very best Gift which
 “ God has given us, are of no real Use and Service to

“ us ; no, not even in discerning which Doctrines come
 “ from God, and which do not. For, if I cannot de-
 “ pend upon the plainest Dictates of Reason, how can I
 “ be assur’d, that any Doctrine is a Revelation from God ?
 “ If I receive it without consulting my Reason, then for-
 “ ought I know, it may be an Imposture ; and I am every
 “ Way as liable to embrace an Error, as the Truth. But
 “ if I embrace it upon the Tryal and Conviction of my
 “ Reason, then ’tis plain, I admit the Principles of Rea-
 “ son are to be depended upon ; which if I do, I cannot
 “ consistently admit any Thing as true, which contra-
 “ dicts it.

To apply this Author’s Reasonings, God is frequently
 Deut. 1. 34. said *to swear* ; nay, in both Old and New Testament, to
 Psalm 95. 11. *swear in Wrath*. Now, if we are to admit nothing, that
 Heb. 3. 11. is repugnant to the natural Notion we have of God, ought
 we not to examine by our Reason, Whether God, who
 has no Superior to invoke, can swear at all ; much less
 be in a Passion, and swear in Wrath ?

— AGAIN, If there are ever so many Texts, which seem-
 ingly confine Salvation to a Belief, to which the greatest
 Part of Mankind are utter Strangers ; or else have not had
 sufficient Reason to see they were oblig’d to examine in-
 to it ; or if they did, could not find out its Truth ; must
 it not, by this Author’s Reasoning, be my Duty to con-
 sider, whether this is consistent with the Character we have
 from the Light of Nature, of the impartial and universal
 Goodness of God, to damn Men for Impossibilities ? Or,
 whether One can be said to be sent as a Saviour of Man-
 kind, if he comes to shut Heaven’s Gates against those,
 to whom before they were open ; provided they follow’d
 the Dictates of their Reason ?

If,

IF, besides these, there are innumerable Texts, which, in the plainest Manner Words can express, impute human Parts, human Infirmities, and human Passions, even of the worst Kind, to God ; does not this suppose, that even all have a Right to examine ; and consequently, sufficient Understanding to judge, when Texts, taken in their plain, obvious Meaning, are, or are not consistent with what the Light of Nature teaches them of the Character of the supreme Being ? What Notions must the Vulgar have of God, if the Light of Nature can't direct them right, when they find he is said to be *jealous* and *furious* ? And *Nah. 1. 2.* God himself says, *My Fury shall come up in my Face, Ezek. 33. 18, for in my Jealousy, and in the Fire of my Wrath have I¹⁹ spoken ;* with a Number of other Expressions of the like Nature ? Nay, does not the Scripture, if taken literally, suppose, that God does Things of the greatest Moment in Anger and Fury ? Was it not thus he gave his Favourite People, *Statutes, which were not good ; and Judgments, by which they could not live ?* And does not *St. Peter* (to mention no other Apostle) tho' a Jew, call the Jewish Law, given by God, *a Yoke, that neither we, or Acts 15. 10 our Fore-fathers could bear ?* In what a Number of Places is God said to do Things to try People ; and yet notwithstanding this Caution, how often is he said to *repent* ? Does he not even repent of the first Action he did in relation to Man ? *He repented that he made Man, Gen. 6. 8. and it grieved him at his Heart.* Nay, does not the Scripture suppose he has so often repented, that he is *weary Jer. 15. 6 of repenting ?* What strange Notions must the Bulk of Mankind, cou'd not their Reason direct them right, have of the supreme Being, when he is said to have *rested, Exod. 31. 17. and to be refreshed ;* and that *Wine cheareth both God and Judges 9. 13.*

Man? And what is yet stranger, such Actions are attributed to him, as can only belong to the lowest Rank of Creatures, such as *kissing*; God being in three Places in the Prophets said *to kiss*; and in one Place *to kiss for a Fly, that is in the uttermost Part of the River of Egypt, and for the Bee, that is in the Land of Assyria?*

Iſa. 5. 26.

Zach. 10. 8.

Iſa. 7. 18.

B. DIVINES tell us, We must recede from the Letter, when the Nature of the Thing requires it; that is, when it contains any Notion, or Fact, which our Reason tells us, is unworthy of God, as being inconsistent with his Wisdom, Goodness, Justice, Immutability, impartial and universal Benevolence, or any other of his Perfections; or any Ways clashes with those Duties, that Men as Men, or Creatures of the same Creator, owe their Fellow-Creatures.

A. I shou'd think that Man was unreasonable, who requir'd a greater Scope in reading any Book, than what these Divines allow him in reading the Scripture; especially, considering the frequent Occasion he will have to exercise his reasoning Faculty, in allegorising away Facts deliver'd after the plainest Manner: As for Instance, If Reason tells us, that God, the Only True God is *invisible*, we must not interpret those numerous Texts literally, which suppose him to have been so often seen by mortal Eyes: No; not even those which represent him for many Days together visible on Mount *Sinai*, where what was under his Feet is mention'd; and that the *Nobles on whom God*

Exod. 24. 10.

11.

Comment on the Place.

laid not his Hand, saw God, and did eat, and drink. And Bishop *Patrick* says, "That after they saw God, they were so far from receiving any Harm, that they feasted with him upon the Relicks of the Peace-Offerings, with great Joy and Gladness." And tho' 'tis said, *God spake to*

to

to Moses Face to Face, as a Man does to his Friend, yet ^{Exod. 33. 11.} for the same Reason, that Text must not be interpreted literally.

B. THAT's certain, since God, in the same Chapter, says to Moses, *Thou canst not see my Face, for there shall* ^{Exod. 33. 20.} *no Man see me, and live.*

A. DOES not God immediately add, *Behold there is a* — ^{Ver. 21,} *Place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a Rock. And it shall* ^{22, 23.} *come to pass, while my Glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a Clift of the Rock; and I will cover thee with my Hand; while I pass by. And I will take away mine Hand, and thou shalt see my Back-parts; but my Face shall not be seen: And since Reason tells us, God has neither Fore-parts, or Back-parts, must not the Rock, the Clift of the Rock, and the Hand that cover'd Moses in this Clift, and the Back-parts seen upon taking away the Hand, be understood by Men of the meanest Capacity, in a spiritual Sense?*

ACCORDING to the acknowledg'd Maxims, You have laid down from Divines, we must not take literally the two Conferences mention'd in the first and second of Job between God and Satan; when *Satan*, in very good Company, *with the Sons of God, presented himself before the Lord; who, when Satan wou'd not otherwise be satisfy'd of Job's Integrity, permitted him to slay Job's Children and Servants, and reduce him to Extremity to make the Experiment. The same may be said of the Lord's saying at another Time to Satan, standing at the right Hand of the Angel of the Lord, to resist the High Priest Joshua, standing likewise before him. The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan: And must we not think it* ^{Zech. 3. 1, 2;} *as unworthy of God, to talk to a Serpent as to Satan? Or, how can we conceive a Serpent cou'd talk to Eve, and delude the Mother of Mankind, tho' in the high State of*
Per-

2 Cor. 11. 3. Perfection; even tho' the Apostle says, *The Serpent deceiv'd Eve by his Subtilty.*

ONE wou'd be almost apt to imagine, that the Author of the Book of *Genesis* thought, that Words had Ideas naturally fix'd to them, and not by Consent: Otherwise, say they, how can we account for his supposing, that God brought all Animals before *Adam*, as soon as he was created, to give them Names; and that *Whatsoever Adam call'd every living Creature, that was the Name thereof*; and that the *Serpent* and *Eve*, almost as soon as created, entertain'd one another in the same Language: And some think, that this Author did not know the Reason of the necessary Variety of Language upon the Increase of Mankind, by making God to come down to see *the City and Tower, whose Top was design'd to reach to Heaven*; and then saying, *this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrain'd from them, which they have imagin'd to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their Language.* And, perhaps, the not knowing the natural Cause of the *Rain-bow*, occasion'd that Account we have in *Genesis* of its Institution.

As to the Story of an Angel of God's wrestling all Night with *Jacob*, and then *laming*, and *blessing him*, and *changing his Name*; "Interpreters of Note, whether *Jews* or *Christians* (as Mr. *Nye* observes) understood it done, not in Fact, but in Vision only;" tho' One would imagine the *Jews* thought it literally true, because the Text says, *They eat not of the Sinew, that Sinew, which sprank, unto this very Day.*

WHAT a Number of Ideas must *Balaam's Ass* have, to be able to reason with his Master; when he saw, and knew an Angel: And tho' 'tis said by *Peter*, that *the dumb Ass speaking with Man's Voice, forbad the Madness of the*

Pro-

Prophet ; yet in the Story itself, there does not appear any Thing like Madness : For that Prophet did nothing but what the Lord enjoin'd him ; and declares, tho' Balak wou'd give me his House full of Silver and Gold, I cannot go beyond the Word of the Lord, my God. And when he went to Baalam's second Messenger, it was by the exprefs Command of God ; and yet the Text says, *God's Anger was kindl'd be-* Num. 22. 22. *cause he went* : And then follows the Dialogue between the Ass and his Master.

How many Commands did God give his Prophets, which if taken according the Letter, seem unworthy of God, as making them act like mad Men, or Idiots ? As for Instance, The Prophet *Isaiah walk'd for three Years together naked for* Isa. 20. 3. *a Sign.* *Jeremiab* is commanded to carry his Girdle as far Jer. 13. 4. 6. *as Euphrates, and there to bury it in the Hole of a Rock ; and after many Days he is sent to dig it up again.* So he is commanded to make Bands and Yokes, and put them about — 27. 2. 3. *his Neck, and send them to several Kings.* *Ezekiel* is commanded by the Lord to draw Jerusalem on a Tile, and lay Ezek. 4. 1. *Siege to it, build a Fort against it, set a Camp against it,* 2, 3, 4. *and set battering Rams against it round about.* Moreover, to take an Iron Pan, and set it for a Wall of Iron between him and the City : And immediately after he is commanded to lye three hundred and ninety Days on one Side, and forty Days on the other ; and then to mix Man's Dung with his Bread. And afterwards the Lord said, *I have given thee* — Ver. 12, 15. *Cow's Dung for Man's Dung.* At another Time he is commanded to dig a Hole through the Wall of his House, and Ezek. 12. 5, 6. *carry forth his Goods in the Twilight, and cover his Face, as not to see the Ground.* And as St. John was commanded to eat a Book, so the Prophet was commanded to eat a Roll ; Rev. 10. 9. *and likewise to clip his Hair, and to dispose of the Clip-* Ezek. 3. 1, 3. *pings* 5. 1, 2, 3, 4.

things after a very odd Manner; and several other Things as strange, too many here to mention. And the Prophet *Hofea*, who was likewise a Priest, was bid to take a *Wife of Whoredoms*; (tho' that by *Moses's* Law was forbid a *Priest*;) and *Children of Whoredoms*; and had three Children by this Wife, to whom *the Lord himself* gave Names.

No *Mathematician* cou'd give a more exact Description of a City, than *John* does of *that great City, the Holy Jerusalem*; which *from an high Mountain* he saw descending out of Heaven from God; and he was so near it, as to describe the *Gates, Wall and Streets*; and to measure its Length, Breadth, and Height *with a Reed*. And *Tertulian* assures us, "that in his Time, there was seen for forty Days together, a City hanging in the Air over *Judea*." And yet Interpreters have since allegoris'd this great City into a meer Castle in the Air. But,

✓ To come to Things of greater Moment, did not the Scripture suppose Reason was able to teach Men of the meanest Capacity, that God cou'd not be deceiv'd himself, or deceive us; the Prophet *Jeremiah* wou'd not have said, *O Lord, Thou hast deceiv'd me, and I was deceived; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed. — Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a Liar, and as Waters that fail?* And in another Prophet the Lord says, *The Days are prolonged, and every Vision fails*. And tho' the Lord adds, *There shall none of my Words be prolonged any more, but the Word, which I have spoken shall be done*; yet he afterwards says, *If the Prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a Thing, I, the Lord, have deceived that Prophet*. And if the Prophet is deceived, must not the People, who rely on that Prophet, be deceived? And does not the Prophet *Jeremiah* say, *Ah! Lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this People?* And to the same

same Purpose the Prophet *Isaiab*, O Lord, thou hast made *Isa. 63. 17.*
us to err.

THERE are other Texts which go further, and, if taken literally, represent God not only falsifying his Words but his Oaths. To mention two, the first relates to the Children of *Israel*, to whom the Lord said, *Ye shall not* Num. 14. 30.
come into the Land concerning which I swear to make you ^{34.}
dwell; and ye shall know my Breach of Promise. The second is in *Psalms* 89. in the first Part of which is largely set forth the Promises of God to *David* by Covenant and Oath; and in the other Part *David* complains of God's Breach, both of his Covenant, and his Oath; and in summing up those Breaches he says, *Thou hast made void the Covenant of thy* Psalms 89. 39.
Servant: Lord, where are thy former loving Kindnesses which — Ver. 49.
thou swearest to David in thy Truth? And there are several Facts mention'd in Scripture, which, if taken literally, look as tho' the Prophets either were deceiv'd themselves, or were willing to deceive others. The Prophetess *Hilda* assures good King *Josiah* from the Lord, that he shou'd *be gather'd* 2 Chron. 34. 28.
to his Grave in Peace; and yet soon after he receiv'd a mor- Ib. 35. 23.
tal Wound, of which he dy'd. The Prophet *Elisba* sends 2 Kings 8. 7-10.
Word to *Benbadad*, the King of *Syria*, who consults him 7-10.
about his Recovery, that he may, (or rather shall, or will, for so it ought to be render'd,) certainly recover; yet he tells *Hazacl*, who had a Design on his Crown and Life (and who before had been anointed King of *Syria* by the Prophet 1 Kings 19. 15.
Elijah, that *he should surely die.* And this look'd the more 15.
ungrateful in the Prophet, because he had receiv'd *forty Ca-*
mel Loads of the good Things of Damascus, to tell the King 2 Kings 8. 8, 9.
the Truth. But I need not mention single Prophets deceiv-
ing, or being deceiv'd, when the Scripture tells us of four 2 Chron. 18. 5,
hundred being deceiv'd at once, to the Destruction of a 2.

2 Chron. 18.
5, 18, 21, 22.

Number of innocent Persons. *I saw*, says the Prophet *Micaiah*, the Lord sitting upon his Throne, and all the Host of Heaven standing on his right Hand, and on his left. And the Lord said; who shall entice Ahab, King of Israel; that he may go up, and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And One spake, saying after this Manner; and another saying after that Manner. Then there came out a Spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will entice him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said I will go out, and be a lying Spirit in the Mouth of all his Prophets. And the Lord said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail. Go out, and do even so.

Jude 9, 12.

As to the New Testament, I shall now only observe, that tho' St. *Jude* quotes (besides the Assumption of *Moses*) a Prophecy of *Enoch*, the seventh from *Adam*, and the Book containing this Prophecy was then in being; yet, because there were Things in it, which seem'd unworthy of God, and cou'd not be well allegoris'd; the Authority of an inspir'd Person quoting it as an inspir'd Book, cou'd not support its Credit; but it fell into Contempt, and was lost.

B. THO' You allow Reason to be the proper Judge in Things of Morality, as falling under its Cognizance; yet as to Prophecies, You must own, we are entirely to rely on Authority.

A. I have hitherto said nothing in relation to Prophecies, desigining to speak of them at another Season; but since You mention them, I must, as to the Prophecies in the Old Testament, confess my Ignorance, that I do not understand them; and Divines themselves, as far as I can find, are infinitely divided about interpreting them: And as to those Prophecies, if they may be so call'd, in the New Testament, relating to the *Second Coming of Christ*, and the End
of

of the World, the best Interpreters and Commentators own, the Apostles themselves were grossly mistaken; there scarce being an Epistle, but where they foretell that those Times they wrote in, were *Tempora novissima*; and the then Age the last Age, and those Days the last Days; and that the *End of the World was nigh, and the Coming of Christ at hand*; as is plain, among other Texts, from 1 Cor. 10. 11. Rom. 13. 11, 12. Heb. 9. 26. Jam. 5. 7, 8. 1 John 2. 18. 2 Pet. 3. 12, 13. And they do not assert this as a meer Matter of Speculation, but build Motives and Arguments upon it, to excite People to the Practice of Piety, and all good Works; as Phil. 4. 5. *Let your Moderation be known to all Men, the Lord is at Hand.* And to the same Purpose are Heb. 10. 24, 25. 1 Pet. 4. 7, 8. 1 Cor. 7. 29. 2 Pet. 3. 11, 12. And tho' they do not pretend to tell the very Day and Hour, when these Things must happen; yet they thought it wou'd be during their Time, and continually expected it. Timothy is charged to *keep this Commandment — till the* 1 Tim. 6. 13, *Appearing of the Lord.* So Paul says to the Corinthians, *As oft* 14. *as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till he comes.* And I think, 'tis plain, Paul himself expected to be alive at the Coming of the Lord, and that he had the Word of God for it. *For this we say unto you by* 1 Thes. 4. 13, *the Word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain* 16, 17, 18. *unto the Coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are* See Grotius in loc. *asleep. — The dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the Clouds, to meet the Lord in the Air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these Words.* And there are other Texts to the same Purpose, as 1 Cor. 15. 51, 52. 2 Cor. 5. 4.

2 Thel. 2. 3. B. DOES not St. Paul suppose, that before the Coming of Christ, *Antichrist must appear?*

A. THAT does not in the least hinder, but he might believe both wou'd happen in his Time; For, says he, *the Mystery of Iniquity does already work.* And St. John puts this Matter out of Dispute, in saying, *Little Children, it is the last Time; and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last Time.*

2 Pet. 3. 3. 4. B. DOES not St. Peter say, *There shall come in the last Days, Scoffers — saying where is the Promise of his Coming?*

A. SAINT Peter owns those to be the last Days, and the Promise of his then Coming he confirms, by saying, *God is not slack concerning his Promise, the Day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night: — What Manner of Persons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness, Looking for, and hasting unto the Coming of the Day of God, wherein the Heavens being on Fire shall be dissolved, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat: Nevertheless we according to his Promise, look for new Heavens, and a new Earth.*

— Ver. 8, B. DOES not St. Peter say, *Beloved be not ignorant of this one Thing, that one Day is with the Lord as a thousand Years, and a thousand Years as one Day?*

A. THIS, as in the Margin, seems to be quoted from Psalm 90. 4. where 'tis said, *A thousand Years in thy Sight, are but as Yesterday when it is past.* And surely St. Peter cou'd not imagine, that God affected to speak unintelligibly; and by one Day meant a thousand Years; and by a thousand Years one Day; and refer to this Place as a Proof.

B. DI-

B. DIVINES are at a Loss how to account for the Apostles so frequently declaring, the *End of all Things to be at Hand, and Christ to be then a coming*; when our Saviour says, *Of that Day and Hour knoweth no Man; no, not the Angels of Heaven, but my Father only.* Mat. 24. 36.

A. THOSE Divines wou'd not make these Reflections, did they but consider what our Saviour declares to his Disciples, when they came to him privately, saying, *Tell us when these Things shall be; and what shall be the Sign of thy Coming, and of the End of the World.* Does he not in Answer to their Question, tell them what those Signs wou'd be? withal adding, *So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these Things, know that it is near, even at the Doors. Verily, I say unto you, This Generation shall not pass, till all these Things be fulfill'd.* Ver. 33. And to assure them of the Truth of what he declares, *Heaven and Earth, says he, shall pass away; but my Words shall not pass away.* And his adding, *But of that Day and Hour knoweth no Man; no, not the Angels of Heaven, but my Father only*; was not meant to contradict what he just before declar'd, that *this Generation shall not pass till these Things be fulfill'd*; but to warn his Disciples not to be surpris'd as the old World was, *when the Flood came, and swept them all away; Watch therefore, for ye know not what Hour your Lord will come: But know this, that if the good Man of the House had known in what Watch the Thief wou'd have come, he wou'd have watch'd.* — And the Apostles agreeable to this Admonition of the Lord, say, *Yourselves know perfectly, that the Day of the Lord cometh as a Thief in the Night.* 1 Thes. 5. 2. 2 Pet. 3. 10. And after the Resurrection our Saviour says to Peter, who asks him concerning the beloved Disciple; *If I will, that he tarry 'till I come, what is that to thee?* John 21. 22. And the last Thing his Disciples ask'd him on his Ascension, is, *Wilt thou at this* Act. 1. 6.

this Time, restore again the Kingdom to Israel? And the Answer he gave them is very consistent with the Kingdom, even the temporal Kingdom of *Israel's* being restor'd again during their Lives. And by our Saviour's saying, when the
 Mat. 26. 29. last Supper was ended, *I will not drink henceforth of the Fruit of the Vine, until that Day I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom.* They no doubt, believ'd this happy Time was not far off. But,

IF most of the Apostles, upon what Motives soever, were mistaken in a Matter of this Consequence, how can we be certain, that any One of them may not be mistaken in any other Matter? If they were not inspir'd in what they said in their Writings concerning the then Coming of Christ; how cou'd they be inspir'd in those Arguments they build on a Foundation far from being so? And if they thought their Times were the last, no Direction they gave, cou'd be intended to reach further than their own Times. And if *John* the Evangelist, and *John* the Divine are the same Person, he must believe what is mention'd in the *Revelation*, wou'd have happen'd within the Compass of that Age in which he writ. But leaving these Matters to another Time, let us return to the Consideration of those Duties, which Reason shews us from the Nature of God and Man, and the Relation Men stand in to him, and one another.

As I have already shown You by a number of Instances, where Divines themselves own, that tho' the literal Sense of the Scripture be ever so plain, yet it must not stand in Competition with what our Reason tells us of the Nature and Perfections of God; so I shall now shew You, the same in relation to those Duties Men owe to one another; and that if Men are not well grounded in the Reason and Nature of Things

Things, and from thence judge of their Duty, in Relation to one another; there are Things either commanded, or approv'd of in the Scripture, which might be apt to lead Men astray. A Man, who looks no further than That, might think it no Crime to cheat his elder Brother, impose on his aged Parent, and by a Lie obtain his Blessing; nay, hope that God wou'd confirm it, when he sees how *Jacob* obtain'd the greatest Blessing from God. Gen. 27.

If Men flatter themselves, that they are true *Israelites*, and those of a different Religion, mere *Egyptians*; will they not be apt to imagine, when they see how the *Israelites* spoil'd the *Egyptians* by the Command of God himself, who made them borrow what they were not to repay; that this might be a good Precedent for them?

B. I must own, that a Command to *lend, hoping for nothing again*; and a Command to *borrow, without returning any thing again*, seem to be very different Commands. Luke 6. 35. Exod. 3. 21. — 22. 35, 36.

A. WHEN Men find the Harlot *Rabab* celebrated, even in the *New Testament*, for lying to the Government, and betraying her Country to its most cruel Enemies; are they not in Danger, if they find their Advantage in it, and 'tis for the Service of those they judge to be true *Israelites*; to do the same? since 'tis not pretended the Harlot had any more a special Command for so doing, than *Jael* had for an Act of the highest Treachery; for which, because it serv'd the Interest of *Israel*, she is declar'd by the Prophets *Deborah* to be blest above Women. Heb. 11. 31. Jam. 2. 25. Judg. 5. 24.

WHAT Prince can ever want a Pretence of going to War, and totally extirpating those he invades; when he sees, *Saul* was commanded by God to destroy the *Amalekites, Men and Women, Infants and Sucklings, Ox and Sheep, Camel and Ass*, for an Injury done four hundred Years before? And how for 1 Sam. 15. 2. Exod. 17. 8.

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1 Sam. 15 9. sparing *Agag*, (whom *Samuel* hew'd to Pieces before the Lord;) and preserving some of the Cattle for Sacrifice, the
 &c.
 — 16. 2. &c. Lord rejected him from being King; nay, order'd *Samuel* least *Saul* shou'd suspect the Design, to pretend a Sacrifice, when he sent him to anoint *David*?

Wou'd not People, if like the Children of *Israel*, they were destitute of an Habitation, be apt to think what the *Israelites* did, to the *Canaanites*, a good Precedent; and that they might invade a neighbouring, idolatrous Nation, that never did them the least Harm; and extirpate not only Men and Women, but even their innocent Infants; in Order to get Possession of their Country? And I question' whether the *Spaniards* wou'd have murder'd so many Millions in the *Indies*, had they not thought they might have us'd them like *Canaanites*.

J d. 3. 15, 20. How many Precedents, besides that of *Ehud*, (who, on a
 21. Message from the Lord, stabb'd the King to whom his his People sent him with a Present) did the *Popish* Priests plead from the *Old Testament*, for the Assassination of the two *Henries* of *France*? And had the *Gun-Powder-Plot* succeeded here, they wou'd, no doubt, have made Use of the same Plea to justify it.

Tho' the Lord bids the *Jews* to pray for the Peace of
 Jer. 29. 7. *Babylon*, *whither he had caus'd them to be carry'd away captives*; and that *in the Peace thereof they shou'd have Peace*;
 Psa. 137. 8, 9. yet is it not said in the *Psalms*, *O Daughter of Babylon*, *happy shall he be, who taketh, and dasheth thy little Ones against the Stones*; and this for no other Reason, but be-
 — Ver. 3. cause *she desir'd of her Captives one of the Songs of Zion*.

THE holier Men in the *Old Testament* are represented, the more cruel they seem to be, as well as more addicted to Cursing: How plentifully does *David* in the

109th Psalm bestow the bitterest Curfes on his Enemies ? And how cruelly did he treat the *Ammonites*, when he took their Cities, *cutting the People with Saws, and with Harrows of Iron, and with Axes* ? 1 Chr. 20. 3.

Who is not surpris'd to find the holy Prophet *Elisha* cursing, *in the Name of the Lord, little Children*, for calling him *bald Pate* ? And what is still more surprising, *Two She Bears*, upon his cursing, *strait devour'd forty two little Children*. 2 Kings. 2. 23. 24.

AND he likewise entail'd the Curse of Leprosy on his Man *Gebazi*, and his Seed for ever, for accepting, without his Master's Knowledge, a small Present from *Naaman*, the *Affyrian* ; tho' the Prophet himself afterwards took *forty Camel Loads of the good Things of Damascus*, to tell their King the Truth, in relation to his Recovery ; and yet deceiv'd him. Ib. 5. 27. Ib. 8. 9. &c.

Elijah's causing *Fire to come down from Heaven*, to destroy two Captains with their Companies, for no other Fault, but bluntly delivering a Message from the King, and perhaps, in the very Words they were commanded ; was not so cruel, as his hindring it from *raining upon the Earth* Jam. 5. 17. for the Space of three Years and six Months ; since a Drought of that Continuance, without Dew or Rain, in such a barren Country as *Judea*, must have, without Miracles, destroyed every Thing ; and yet St. *James* from hence takes Occasion to recommend the Efficacy of Prayer. Jam. 5. 17.

IF God will not, in this Life, miraculously alter the Course of Things, for the sake of the innocent ; he, certainly, will not do it for the guilty ; nor break in upon the ordinary Methods and Laws of his Providence, to punish one Man for the Crime of another ; the innocent for the guilty. If God cou'd act thus, it wou'd be no Crime in

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Man to imitate him ; nay, how cou'd we be sure, if God deals thus with his Creatures in this Life, he will not act so in the Life to come ; since if the eternal Rules of Justice are once broke, how can we imagine any Stop ? And yet,

ARE there not Examples in Scripture, which, taken in their literal Sense, seem to make God break in upon the common Course of Nature, and the ordinary Rules of his Providence, to punish Men for Crimes they were not guilty of ; as God's causing, in the latter End of *David's* Reign, ^{2 Sam. 21. 1.} *a Famine for three Years together*, for the Crime of *Saul* and his bloody House, in slaying the Gibeonites : And that God smote Israel, and destroy'd seventy thousand of them for *David's* Fault, in causing the innocent Sheep, as he justly calls them, *to be number'd*.

B. I believe there must be some Mistake in this last Story ; for is it not fit for several important Reasons, that Kings shou'd know the Numbers of their People ? Are they not the Strength and Riches of their Kingdom ? And was not the People of *Israel*, by being frequently number'd, and sometimes by God's own Appointment, a good Precedent for *David* ? But passing that by, how can we reconcile this — ^{Ib. 24. 1.} Story with itself ? In one Place 'tis said, *God mov'd David* ^{1 Chr. 21. 1.} *to number Israel* ; in another *Satan provok'd David*. Did God conspire with Satan in this Act, in Order to destroy a Number of innocent Persons ? But do these two Places any more agree in the Account *Joab* gives in of the Number of the People ? nay, if in the Beginning of *Saul's* Reign, the Numbers were rightly calculated, 'tis morally impossible, ^{1 Sam. 11. 8.} to say nothing of the Destruction made by continual War, that either Account shou'd be true. Besides,

CAN God change his Mind, and that suddenly too? Yet 'tis said, *God sent an Angel to Jerusalem to destroy it*; and as he was destroying it, *the Lord beheld, and repented him of the Evil*. And can any One think this to be a meer Pestilence, when a real Angel is said to be miraculously sent to execute God's Anger? *And David, with the Elders of Israel, fell on their Faces, and saw the Angel of the Lord stand between the Earth and the Heavens, having a drawn Sword in his Hand, by the Threshing-floor of Ornan, the Jebusite*; and is there commanded to build an Altar.

A. WHAT You say may be true, since there are several Mistakes crept into the Old Testament; where there's scarce a Chapter, which gives any historical Account of Matters, but there are some Things in it, which cou'd not be there originally; and even in this Book of *Chronicles*, there are Things mention'd, too late to be insert'd by *Ezra*, or *Nehemiah*.
See Pridaux's Connect Part I B. 5. p. 343. & B. 8. p. 574.
 And I might add, that the *Jewish* History being for the most Part taken from larger Accounts, 'tis no Wonder its Abstracts are not always very exact.

I cou'd give You many more Instances of this Nature, but I am afraid some will think these too many; tho' I have said nothing, but what Archbishop Tillotson does in Effect, in affirming, "The Difference between the Style of
Serm. Vol. 2. p. 185.
 "the Old and New Testament is so very remarkable, that
 "one of the greatest Sects in the primitive Times did upon
 "this very Ground, found their Heresy of *Two Gods*: The
 "One evil, fierce, and cruel, whom they call'd *The God*
 "of the *Old Testament*; the Other good, kind, and mer-
 "ciful, whom they call'd *The God of the New Testament*:
 "So great a Difference is there between the Representa-
 "tions, which are made of God in the Books of the
 "*Jewish* and *Christian* Religion, as to give, at least, some

“ Colour, and Pretence for an Imagination of Two Gods.”

But,

IT must be own'd, that the same Spirit (I dare not call it a Spirit of Cruelty) does not alike prevail throughout the Old Testament; the nearer we come to the Times of the Gospel, the milder it appear'd; for tho' God declares in the Decalogue, that he is a *Jealous God, visiting the Iniquity of the Parents upon their Children, to the third and fourth Generation*; and accordingly *Achan*, with all his Family, was destroy'd for his single Crime; yet the Lord afterwards says, *The Soul that sinneth, it shall dye; the Son shall not bear the Iniquity of the Father, &c.*

OUR Saviour, by saying, *He came not to destroy Mens Lives, but to save them*; condemns their taking away the Lives of any, except in Defence of their Own, and of what is necessary for their Support; and this he declares, upon a most remarkable Occasion: Some of his Disciples, upon his not being receiv'd into a Samaritan Village, *because his Face was towards Jerusalem*, strait cry'd, *Wilt thou we command Fire from Heaven, and consume them, as Elias did?* He rebuk'd them, and said, *Ye know not what Manner of Spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy Mens Lives, but to save them.* If any Precedent might have been pleaded from the Old Testament, it wou'd, no doubt, have been that of *Elias*, the Fore-runner of our Saviour; who came from Heaven (to which he went up by a Whirlwind in a Chariot of Fire, with Horses of Fire) to meet our Saviour on a high Mountain.

AND if it be contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel, even to wish to imitate that great Prophet so favour'd of God; the same will hold as strongly, in relation to all the Actions that are of a like Nature of other Holy Men, tho' quo-
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ted with Approbation in the New Testament ; as *Moses* is, for acting the Part of a Magistrate, when a private Man, in *Acts* 7. 24. destroying his Fellow Subject. And if there's a Contrast between the Spirit of the Old, and the Spirit of the New Testament, ought not we *Christians* to stick to the latter ; and not suppose the Texts, which require doing Good even to the *Gentiles*, and dealing with them as ourselves expect to be dealt with ; to relate to *Christians* only before they had Power to act otherwise ; and that after they were to be govern'd by Precedents from the Old Testament ?

B. ARE there any so absurd, as to endeavour thus to reconcile the Old and New Testament ?

A. WE find the Orthodox, as soon as they had a Prince, who refus'd Submission to their Decisions in the Council of *Nice*, in express Terms own'd as much.

Lucifer Calaritanus, then a most orthodox Bishop, in several Discourses address'd to the Son of *Constantine* the Great ; does not scruple to tell the Emperor himself, that it was the Duty of the Orthodox to kill him, on the Account of his *Arianism* ; which he calls *Idolatry* : And for this he quotes *Deut.* 13. 6. and *1 Maccab.* 1. 43, to Ver. 29th of Chap. 2.. and then insultingly says, “ If you had been
“ in the Hands of *Matthias*, or *Phineas*, they wou'd have
“ kill'd You. You say you suffer despiteful Usage from us,
“ contrary to the Admonitions of holy Scripture.— If ever
“ any One of the Worshipers of God spared Apostates, let
“ what You say of us be true. — Pray shew me but one
“ of them, that ever spar'd the Adversaries of his Religion :”
And the Texts for Obedience to Magistrates from *Titus* 3. 1.
he evades, by saying, “ That the Apostle spoke of those
“ Princes and Magistrates, who as yet had not believed in
“ the only Son of God ; that they by our Humility, and
“ Meek-

See S. Johnson's Answer to Hick's Constants, where the Story is at large. p. 56. &c. and al. p. 75. 76. 77. taken out of Biblioth. vet. Patr. To 4. Col. 1. p. 164. &c.

“ Meekness, and suffering long under Adversity, and all possible Obedience in Things fitting, might be won over to Christianity.

Athanasius, and the Confessors that were with him highly applauded *Lucifer's* Discourses, and says, “ We plainly see the Picture of an Apostle, the Boldness of a Prophet, the Magistery of Truth, the Doctrine of true Faith. — You seem to be the true Temple of our Saviour, who dwelling in You, speaks these Things by You. —

“ BELIEVE me, *Lucifer*, You alone did not say these Things, but the Holy Ghost with You ; how came You to remember Scripture at that Rate ? how came You to understand the Sense and Meaning of it so perfectly ; if the Holy Ghost had not assisted You in it ?

THEY, who design a New Religion, in Opposition to establish'd Ones, wou'd, no doubt, as these Fathers suppose, begin with Precepts of the greatest Humanity and Tenderness, and doing the utmost Good to Mankind, tho' of ever so different Persuasions ; but to think, as these Fathers then did, (and the Orthodox, if we judge from their Actions, have ever since thought ; (that all the Precepts of the Gospel of this Nature were design'd only to draw *Jews* and *Gentiles* into the Church, as Gallants gain their Mistresses by Obsequiousness ; and that after they were once in, the Church (as all Sects and Parties term themselves) had a Right to murder, not only private Persons, but even their Sovereigns, for not holding the orthodox Faith ; and that this is the only Way to reconcile the Old and New Testament ; is a Notion highly injurious to the Christian Religion.

'Tis, no doubt, the Interest of wicked Priests, to have God represented under opposite Characters ; and to give in one Testament Rules contrary to those in the other ; that they

they, as it serves their Turn, may make Use of either: But is it not astonishing for Saints and Confessors upon the first Occasion, to renounce their former Principles; and in Defiance of their Oaths of Allegiance, represent a Man *inspir'd by the Holy Ghost*, and say, that *Christ spoke in him*; when he declares it the Duty of Christians to murder an heretical Emperor?

B. THOSE holy Fathers, I suppose, thought, they saw Things of the greatest Consequence, tho' commanded in the Old, forbidden in the New Testament; and that to make the Old and New Testament to contradict each other in these Things, was to destroy the Authority of both; and therefore concluded, this Expedient was the only Way to support both.

B. By reasoning thus, instead of reconciling both, they destroy'd both, and natural Religion too; in supposing Things are not good and evil in themselves; but that all depends on the Will of an arbitrary Being, which might endlessly change. But,

If there's a Law of Nature, with the observing of which God can't dispense either in himself, or in his Creatures; and no Religion can be true, that in the minutest Circumstances is contrary to it's Righteousness; and the Gospel inculcates all such Precepts of Natural Religion, as require doing Good to *Jew* and *Gentile*, even the same we expect from them; and that we are indispensably bound to allow all others the same Right of judging for themselves, as we claim for ourselves; must we not, if we will support the Credit of the Old Testament, suppose it to contain nothing inconsistent with this natural Right confirm'd by the Gospel? If this be not so, pray shew me my Mistake; but if it be just Reasoning, tell me how You can account for the Conduct of the *Jews*, in invading, and that too without any Declaration of War,
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See *Prideaux's*
Lett. to the
Deists, p. 127.
Edit. 7. 8vo.

the *Canaanites*, a free and independant Nation, and against whom they had not the least Cause of Complaint; and on Pretence of their being Idolaters, destroying not only the Men and Women, but Infants incapable of Idolatry, or any other Crime. This, You know, has given great Advantage to the Enemies of our Religion, who represent the whole Proceeding, as an unparallell'd Piece of Injustice and Cruelty; and therefore, I should be glad to know what our Divines, if they do not interpret this Fact allegorically, or as only done in Vision; say, to shew 'tis not contrary to the Law of Nature, and those Precepts of the Gospel which are founded on it.

B. I wonder you can be ignorant, with what Ease our Divines solve this seeming Difficulty, by having Recourse to a positive Command for treating the *Canaanites* as they did.

A. SUCH a Command is pleaded in vain, except it can be shewn, that the Thing suppos'd to be commanded, is not inconsistent with the Law of Nature; which if God can dispense with in any one Case, he may in all; nor cou'd his Wisdom then prescribe any certain Rule of Conduct, either for himself or his Creatures; but all wou'd depend on an uncertain, fluctuating, arbitrary Will.

B. MAY not a Thing, which is unlawful for Men to do of themselves, become lawful, by the Command of the Supreme Being?

A. SUPPOSE any shou'd now plead that they had a divine Commission to destroy their next Neighbours, whom they judg'd to be Idolaters, Man, Woman and Child, in Order to possess their Country; wou'd not our Divines say, no Man cou'd be as certain he had any such positive Command from God; as he was, that God had forbid it him by the Light of Nature? Nor cou'd Miracles be a Proof of any such

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Commiffion; fince we can only know from the Nature of the Things themfelves, whether Miracles are done by a good, or evil Being; and we are to compare what we are told of God, with what we know of him; otherwife we believe in Men, and not in God. And if the Light of Nature, (the Voice of God himfelf) teaches us, even to Demonftration, that God is infinitely wife and good; does it not likewife demonftrate, that no Command, not ftamp'd with thefe Characters, can come from him; much lefs a Command inconfiftent with all thofe Duties that Men as Men owe to one another?

B. MAY not God punifh fome wicked Nations with Death, to fright others from committing the fame Crimes?

A. GOD has a thoufand Ways of doing this, without commanding Men to do any Thing, which, by the Law of Nature, he had forbid them; and if God defign'd what he did to be a Terror to others, wou'd he not act after fuch a fignal, and fuper-natural Manner, as all fhould fee it was his own doing; and the Reafon of his fo doing: And in Order to it, diftinguifh between the guilty, and the innocent?

IF God wou'd punifh the *Canaanites*, for acting contrary to the Law of Nature; wou'd he, in Order to do this, require the *Israelites* to act contrary to the fame Law; in murdering Men, Women, and Children, that never did them the leaft Injury?

BESIDES, were not the *Jews*, confidering their Circumftances upon their coming out of *Egypt*, the moft improper People to convince the World, that they did not act out of a private Intereft; but purely to execute God's Vengeance on an idolatrous Nation? Wou'd God, in fuch a Cafe, choofe People as prone to Idolatry as the *Canaanites* themfelves? Some queftion, whether, in this Cafe, the Plea of a divine

Command, if taken literally, will not destroy all the internal Proofs of the Falseness of any Religion ; for can that, *say they*, which is consistent with the Truth of any one true Religion, prove another Religion to be false ? And do not all our Divines, when they are speaking against other Religions, maintain, that their commanding, or approving any Thing contrary to the Law of Nature, is a Demonstration of their Falseness ? since it destroys all the internal Proofs of the Truth of any Religion, and confounds all the essential Marks, by which we discern Good from Evil ; and supposes God may command a Son to sacrifice his Father ; or do any Thing, tho' ever so repugnant to the Light of Nature.

B. THESE Men carry their Reasoning too far ; for has not Providence frequently made use of ill Men, not only to punish ill Men, but for other good Purposes ?

A. IN the Course of Things it can't but happen, that some ill Men may be a Scourge to others ; yet that can't excuse them, if in so doing they act against the eternal Rules of Justice and Equity. Tho' a Thing may be said to be done by the determinate Council of God, yet that will not justify, or excuse those that did it, if not consistent with the Law of Nature. St. Peter, speaking of the holy Child Jesus, says, — *The People of Israel were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy Hand, and thy Counsel determined before to be done* : And yet were not they, and their Posterity punish'd for that Fact, which God's Hand and Counsel had determin'd shou'd be done ? Besides,

If the *Israelites* had a divine Commission to extirpate the *Canaanites*, ought not the *Canaanites* to have known it, to prevent their resisting Men acting by a divine Commission ? Otherwise wou'd there not be two opposite Rights

at

at the same Time ; a Right in the *Jews* by Revelation, to take away the Lives of the *Canaanites* ; and a Right in the *Canaanites* by the Law of Nature, to defend their Lives ?

B. WAS not the *Sun's* standing still for a whole Day together, at the Command of *Joshua*, that he might have Light enough to destroy his Enemies, a sufficient Proof they ought to have offer'd up their Throats ?

A. THAT did not happen till they were defeated before *Gibeon* ; and consequently till then, it cou'd be no Direction to them ; and even after that, *the Lord harden'd their Hearts*, — c. 11. 20. *that they should come against Israel in Battle* ; and tho' 'tis said, that *the living God is among you*, and that *he will not fail to drive out before you the Canaanites, &c.* yet *Israel* — c. 16. 10. — c. 17. 12. cou'd not drive them out of several Places : And in one Instance 'tis said, *The Lord was with Judah, and he drove out the Inhabitants of the Mountain, but could not drive out the Inhabitants of the Valley, because they had Chariots of Iron.* Judges 1. 19.

A Reverend Author, to solve the Difficulties attending this Matter, says, “ The Criticks and Rabbins take Notice, ^{N^o of Nat. and Rev. Relig. p. 201.} “ that it is not said by the Historian, that *Joshua* commanded the *Sun* and *Moon* to stand still ; but he recites the Words of a certain Book (supposed to be a *Poem*, “ written by one *Jasher*) in which the Poet, because of the “ great and long Slaughter, that *Joshua* made of the *Amorites*, introduces *Joshua*, as requiring the *Sun* and *Moon* “ to stand still, while he, and his Army destroy'd the Enemies of the Lord. Which, indeed, was an elegant Fiction, and very proper in a Poem that was written on such “ an Occasion.

AND now let me ask You, Whether the very endeavouring to reconcile this, or any other Facts mention'd in the Old Testament, with the Light of Nature and the Evangelical

lical Precepts, is not a plain Confession what Men ought to think of them, if they cou'd not be reconcil'd; and that we are to use our Reason, in judging of the Actions of the most celebrated Persons of Old? Else, to give no other Instances, than the Transactions between *Judab* and *Tamar*, we might approve her Stratagem, in getting to lye with her Father-in-law; for tho' before he knew himself to be the Man, he was resolv'd to burn her; yet after he cry'd, *She*
 Gen. 38. 27. *has been more righteous than I*: And for this Righteousness she was bless'd with Twins, from whom the Noble House of *Judab*, with all its Kings, and the *Messiah* himself, was descended.

I think, I cou'd not say less than I have, in Vindication of the Precepts of the Gospel; by shewing that they were not design'd merely to draw People into the Profession of the Christian Religion, and then to be laid aside; except where they serv'd the Interest of the local Orthodoxy; but that they are Rules in their own Nature obligatory, which, from their internal Excellency, always bound Mankind; and consequently, all Men, even those of the meanest Abilities, must have been capable of knowing them; and out of Danger, were it not their own Fault, of being misled by any Precedents whatever.

If what has been already said, may not be sufficient to shew, that it can't be imputed to want of Wisdom, or Goodness in God; or to any Defect in Reason, which he has at all Times given Mankind for the Discovery of his Will; that the Nature of Religion is so little understood; and so many Things, which do not shew themselves to be the Will of God, are mix'd with it; let me ask You, whether God has a greater Kindness for the brute, than the rational Creation?

B. THAT

B. THAT, certainly, must be a needless Question.

A. IF God, then, in the very Frame and Make of those Animals we term irrational, has implanted the Sense of every Thing necessary to answer the End of their Creation ; can we imagine, he has not as great a Care of his Creatures endow'd with Reason, and made after his own Image ; and for Ends infinitely more noble than the brute Creation ? when we see with what Skill and Contrivance, Birds, without being taught by any, but the God of Nature, build there Nests ; and how artfully the Spiders frame their Webs ; the Bees their little Cells ; and the Beasts avoid all noxious Herbs ; And not to multiply Instances, how all Animals are endow'd with sufficient Sagacity, for preserving themselves and Species ; must we not own, that what we call *Instinct*, is a certain and infallible Guide for inferior Animals ? and can we doubt, whether Man, the Lord of the Creation, has not from his superior Reason, sufficient Notices of whatever makes for his greatest, his eternal Happiness ?

IF we can't charge God with acting thus partially, must we not be oblig'd to own, that Reason is as certain a Guide for *rational* Creatures, as Instinct is for irrational ? And consequently, that those Men are below Brutes, who, wanting Instinct, will not govern themselves, nor suffer others to be govern'd by Reason ? And

THO' they place the highest Value on themselves for being rational, and by Virtue of it religious ; yet are ever contriving how to hinder the free Exercise of Reason in religious Matters ; as if Reason and Religion were irreconcilable ; and that the Method God proposes for this Discovery of all other Truth, was a most certain Way to confound religious Truth ; and endlessly to multiply Error. But,

THO'

THO' Divines in all Ages have, for the most Part, shewn themselves mortal Enemies to the true Exercise of Reason ; yet now, God be thank'd, there are those among them, who dare do it Justice.

THAT eminent Divine, Mr. S. Nye, tho' writing in Defence of Revelation, says, " 'Tis obvious to every One, " that Natural Religion intimates to us, and comprises *the whole* Duty, that we owe to God or Men : Whatever is to " be believ'd, or done by us, is declar'd and comprehended " in Natural Religion ; God has instructed all Men every " where, in the whole of their Duty, by a connate Light, " even by the Talent of Reason common to all. And,

Serm preach. at the Rolls. p. 47, & p. 5. THE judicious Mr. Butler says, " That nothing can be " more evident, than that exclusive of Revelation, Man- " kind can't be consider'd as a Creature left by his Maker " to act at random — but from his Make, Constitution, " or Nature, he is in the strictest and proper Sense a Law " to himself. There are as real, and the same Kind of Indi- " cations in human Nature, that we were made for So- " ciety, and to do Good to our Fellow-Creatures, as that " we were intended to take Care of our Life, Health, and " private Good.

B. IF what You, and these reverend Authors say, be true ; the Principles, on which all Religion is founded, must be so obvious, that all Men, even of the meanest Capacity, may from thence discern their Duty both to God and Man.

A. YOU shall confess there are such Principles, by my asking You a Question, or two : Is not the Foundation of all Religion, the believing there's only one self-existent Being, to whom all others owe their Being, and their Continuance in Being ? And is it not as certain, as there is such a Being, that he did not create Mankind to supply any Wants of

of his own; or give them Rules for their Conduct, but to oblige them to act for their common Good? If then an Action is for their Good, is not that alone an infallible Test of its being approv'd by God? And if it tends to their Hurt, is not That as certain a Mark of its being disapprov'd by him? But if it tends to neither, does not That sufficiently shew it to be neither approv'd, nor disapprov'd? Since it is as inconsistent with the Goodness of God, to punish Men for not doing an indifferent Thing, as it is with his Wisdom, to reward them for doing it.

B. Tho' all rational Creatures, who, to their utmost, imitate their great Creator and Benefactor, in communicating Happiness to each other, do all that God requires of them; yet 'tis on Supposition, that they do not judge wrong in relation to their common Good?

A. If Men, according to the best of their Understanding, act for their common Good, they then govern themselves by the same Rule God governs them; their Will is the same with his, and they concur in the same Design with him; and should they, in some nice and difficult Cases, mistake in applying the Rule; yet in being intirely govern'd by it, they have done all that God requires; who, having made Men fallible, will not impute to them Want of Infallibility. And the best Way not to mistake, in applying this Rule, is to consider duly all Circumstances, and follow what upon the whole seems best. As this is the Rule both of God and Man, so is it in common to the unlearned as well as learned; for have not all alike Faculties given them by God, to distinguish between Good and Evil; Right and Wrong; and to know, that, as they wou'd not suffer Wrong themselves, so they ought not to do Wrong?

B. THE

Christianity as old as the Creation. **VOL. I.**

B. THE common People may have sufficient Abilities to know their Duty to Man ; but can they as well know what they owe to God ?

A. IN what Point is it, that Men of the meanest Abilities may not know their Duty ; whether it relates to God, or Man ? As to the first, can't they tell what Sentiments inspire them with Love and Reverence for the Deity ? And need they much Reflection to know, that the more any Sentiments do This, the more they ought to be cherish'd ? And that every Notion, which tends not to raise in them the highest Conceptions of the divine Being, is derogatory to his Perfection ; and that the highest Honour and Worship they can render him, is solemnly to own him to be what he is ? And that as they ought themselves to have the highest Ideas of Love and Veneration for their Creator and Benefactor ; so they should on all proper Occasions endeavour to excite the same in others ? And that as they cannot but see, it would be in them affronting God, to offer him a Worship, which they believe he abhors ; so they must think it the same in others ?

As to their Duty to one another ; can't they perceive, that 'tis fit in the Nature of Things, and agreeable to the Mind of their Creator, (who has endow'd them with Reason for this End) to introduce into his Creation as much Happiness as they can ; by being ready to assist, and prevent one another in all good Offices ? And indeed, the reciprocal Duties are so very evident, that even Children are sensible of doing as they would be done unto ; and the Mind, with the same Ease, sees the Agreeableness or Disagreeableness of moral and immoral Actions ; as the Eye discovers Agreeableness, or Disagreeableness in outward Objects. And,

THE meaner People are, and the lower their Station, the fewer are the Things their Duty consists in; and those so very plain, that they cannot well mistake, with Relation either to God, or Man; were they not impos'd on by artful Men; who, in all Ages and Places, have mix'd with pure Religion, Thing tending, indeed, to their own Honour, and their own Good; but far from being consistent with the Honour of God, and the Good of Man; and then pretended they were necessary to influence the common People, who wou'd not be satisfy'd with plain, simple Truths: And from this Source have issu'd out most of those Absurdities, which, to the Scandal of human Nature, have over-run Mankind; and which, for the most Part, were too subtle, and metaphysical for the common People, if left to themselves, ever to have thought of; much less to have rais'd Commotions about them: They, it must be own'd, Peace and Quiet being their Interest, are naturally good Subjects and good Neighbours; and upon all Accounts most useful Members of the Community; except when their Priests, on Pretence of the Good of the Church, work them up to Tumults, Mutiny, Sedition, and Rebellion; because their Governours presume, without their Leave, to give equal Protection to all their Subjects, notwithstanding their different Opinions. And if we consult Ecclesiastical History, we shall find the worst of Princes, have been most sure of their Assistance, even in carrying on the vilest Designs; provided the Church found their Interest in so doing: And the best, of their Opposition, when they design'd the Interest of pure Religion, free from Priestcraft and Superstition. And the Laity, certainly, can't be too much on their Guard, when they find extraordinary Favours, (such as those in a former Reign,) are design'd for the Clergy.

I do not wholly confine this Remark to the Priests of any one Religion ; since by the Influence they have on the Multitude, they have at all Times done sufficient Mischiefs.

Grotius de Im per. summ. Potest. circa sacra. c. 1. Sect. 13. Hence *Grotius* says, “ That, as *Curtius* observ’d of Old, “ the Multitude, ensnar’d by Superstition, are more apt to “ be govern’d by their Priests than Princes ; and that the “ Kings and Emperors have learnt this at their Cost ; inso- “ much that to produce Examples of this Kind, wou’d in a “ Manner, be transcribing the History of all Nations.

THEY, I think, wou’d do no small Service to Mankind, who wou’d improve this Hint of *Grotius*, and shew how the Priests in all Religions, and in all Times, have impos’d on the Credulity of the People ; nor cou’d it but be very acceptable to a Clergy, who abhor all such vile Methods.

B. You all along argue, that the Rule of Action, in Order to human Happiness, being every where the same ; as founded on the Nature of God and Man, and the Relation we stand in to him, and one another ; True Religion, in all Places and Times, must ever be the same ; Eternal, Universal, and Unalterable : And such as every intelligent Creature, must have sufficient Understanding to discover, and Abilities to comply with ; except we suppose a Being perfectly wise, and infinitely good, requires of his Creatures, Things which he has not enabl’d them to know, or perform. And hence You conclude, that external Revelation can only be a Republication of this unchangeable Rule of Life ; but Divines, You are sensible, for the most Part, are of a different Sentiment ; nay, highly complain of the Imperfection and Insufficiency of this Rule.

A. In Order to shew the Absurdity of such Complaints, let me ask You, had Mankind, before any traditional Religion commenc’d, any Religion, or not ?

B. I

B. It must be own'd, that they had a Religion, which, as coming from the Author of all Perfection, must, as worthy of its divine Original, be wholly perfect ; nor cou'd there be a greater Mark of its Perfection, than that of its being universal, unchangeable, and indelibly implanted in human Nature.

A. I will not ask You, whether any Religion, that wants those Marks of Perfection, can come from a Being of infinite Perfection ; but desire to know wherein the Perfection of this universal, and unchangeable Religion consists ?

B. It can't be deny'd, that the End for which God implanted this Religion in human Nature, was to make Men happy here as well as hereafter ; (God's Will in Relation to Man and human Happiness being equivalent Terms) and therefore, he cou'd not, at any Time, leave them destitute of the most proper Means to answer this End.

A. Does not the undeniable Perfection of this universal Religion, sufficiently expose all your Pretences to a New Religion, giv'n by God to any small Part of Mankind in these last Ages ?

B. We say, there was Need of a New Religion, tho' the Old was ever so perfect ; because Men did not observe it.

A. If that was a Reason for a New Religion, we might expect New Religions daily ; “ But, *as the present Bishop* Sherlock's Sermon for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts. “ of Bangor *observes*, tho' the World was the worse for “ abusing the Religion of Nature, and might want to be “ reform'd by a divine Instructor ; yet the Religion of “ Nature was not the worse for being abus'd, but still “ retain'd its first Purity and Simplicity ; ” and consequently, its native Efficacy to make us happy : But Men not paying a due Regard to this most perfect Religion, but

mixing with it human Inventions, it might, then, be agreeable to the divine Goodness, to send Persons to recal them to a more strict Observation of it; which, had it been observ'd, must have destroy'd all Contentions, but of outvying one another in all good Offices; as the corrupting it has done the contrary.

WHICH *Hypothesis*, think You, is most for the Honour of God, and the Good of Man; (those certain Tests by which we are to judge of the Truth of all Matters relating to Religion;) that all God's Laws shou'd carry with them such evident Marks of Goodness and Kindness for the whole Race of Mankind, as that Men of the meanest Capacities, even tho' they can't read in their own native Language, may know their Duty? Or that their Religion, and the Proofs on which it depends, shou'd be originally writ in Languages they understand not; which, by putting all traditional Religions on a Level, obliges them in every Country, to pin their Faith on Men, who are but too apt to abuse the Peoples Credulity to their own Profit?

B. THERE can be no Doubt, but 'tis for the Honour of God, and the Good of Man, that all his Laws shou'd have such a Signature impress'd on them, as may shew his infinite Wisdom and Goodness; but can You say, all his Laws bear this Character?

A. Yes, if they are all of a Piece: And since God had no other End in creating Mankind, but their Good; or in giving them Laws, but as they conduce to that Good; and has given, and requires 'em to use their Understanding to distinguish between Good and Evil; Men, in doing all the Good they can, whether they know any Thing of the Institutions, which prevail in this, or that Age or Country, or not, fully answer the End of their Creation; and do in the
best.

best Manner recommend themselves to the Favour both of God and Man.

WITHOUT the common People are govern'd by those plain, obvious Principles I contend for, they would always be in a State of Uncertainty; since as Bishop *Taylor* justly observes, and all History confirms, "There's no Church that is in Prosperity, but alters her Doctrine every Age; either by bringing in new Doctrines, or by contradicting her old; which shews they are not satisfy'd with themselves, nor with their own Confessions." "Let none of the Heathen, *says an antient Church-Historian*, deride us, because the latter Bishops depose the former, and always find out something which they add to the Faith.

Dedication to Liberty of Prophecy.

Evag. Eccles. Hist. l. 1. c. 11 p. 267.

B. Is there nothing in *Theology*, but what Divines have alter'd?

A. MR. *Le Clerc* observes, that "Theology is subject to Revolutions as well as Empires, but tho' it has undergone considerable Changes, yet the Humour of Divines is much the same.

Life of Nazianzen p. 28. Eng. Transl.

WHATEVER Noise *Ecclesiasticks* make about Creeds, or other Fundamentals, there's very often something else at the Bottom; as whoever is conversant in Church History must know: However to give one Instance, "When the *Eastern* and *Western* Churches in the 9th Century, fell into an Humour of quarrelling upon the Account of Jurisdiction, after some Time of Anger, in which they seem'd to be searching for Matter to reproach one another with; they found out this Difference. The *Greeks* reproach'd the *Latins*, for adding to the Faith about the Procession of the Holy Ghost; and corrupting the ancient Symbol; and that too contrary to the Decree of a General Council. The *Latins* on the other Hand, charg'd them for

Expos of 39 Art. p. 70. Art. 5.

"de-

Ibid.

“ detracting from the Dignity of the *Son*. And this became the chief Point in Controversy between them. ” I can’t but mention Bishop *Burnet*’s Remark on this Dispute, “ We of this Church, *says he*, tho’ we abhor the Cruelty of “ condemning the *Eastern* Churches for such a Difference, “ yet do receive the Creed according to the Usage of the “ *Western* Churches. ” Which is in Effect, damning that Creed, which damns the *Eastern* Churches.

AND it’s plain from Church History, that *Creeds* were the spiritual Arms, with which contending Parties combated each other ; and that those who were the Majority invented such unscriptural Terms, as they thought their Adversaries wou’d most scruple, in Order to the stripping them of their Preferments ; and it wou’d have been well if they had stuck there, and not made use of more cruel Methods.

NONE, who consider how differently the Circumstances of human Affairs, which are continually changing, affect Men ; but must see ’tis scarce possible, that the Doctrines which were originally taught, or the Practice originally us’d in any Institution, shou’d long continue the same ; nothing being more easy than to vary the Signification of Words : The infinite Divisions which prevail’d, even in the primitive and apostolical Times, sufficiently prove this ; without having Recourse to those Alterations and Additions, which the Clergy have since been continually making in Christianity ; especially in the *Greek* and *Latin* Churches. But we need go no further back than the *Reformation* ; did not the whole Body of the People, Laity as well as Clergy, in the Compass of twelve Years, change their Religion three Times ? And it wou’d make no small Book, to shew how since that Time, our Clergy, tho’ their *Calvinistical* Articles continue the same, have vary’d, both as to *Doctrines* and

and *Discipline*. What a quick Change have we seen of those passive Principles, once the Characteristick of the Church? And if we judge by the present Disputes now on Foot, the Clergy are not like to be more fix'd for the future. But of all Clergy-men, they, certainly, are not upon any Account to be rely'd on; who, tho' by their whole Conduct they shew their great Zeal for Persecution; yet talk against an implicit Faith, and recommend *Christianity as requiring no further Favour, than a fair, and impartial Inquiry into its Grounds and Doctrines*. This not only shews their great Hypocrisy, but that they are more cruel than those, who expressly forbid all Examination; since they first tempt Men to examine, and then punish them for so doing, if they presume to differ from their Leaders; and those that forbid all Examination can do no more. And herein they act the Part of Satan, first tempt People, and then punish them for being tempted; so that, strictly speaking, 'tis not always true, that Priests of all Religions are the same; such hypocritical, persecuting Priests are worse than all others; who, while they charge the *Papist*, and *Mahometan*, with a Consciousness of his Religion's being a Cheat, because he will not permit it to be examin'd; not only practise the same themselves, but contend 'tis necessary for the Support of the true Religion.

How easily the Sense of Words may be mistaken, the Apostles themselves are a sufficient Instance; for had they the same Ideas of the Words which Jesus spake, as Jesus himself had, 'tis impossible that after three Years Converse they shou'd be ignorant of the End of his Mission: And if his familiar Friends, who daily convers'd with him in the same Language, and had every Minute an Opportunity of being satisfy'd of their Doubts, cou'd yet so grossly mistake;
well

well may we at this Distance of Time, if we are to be govern'd by Words, and not by the unalterable Reason of Things : And how long was it, till they understood the Meaning of *Teach all Nations, Preach the Gospel to every Creature* ? And St. Peter himself needed a Miracle to open his Understanding, to comprehend a most evident Truth.

Acts 10. 34. *Then Peter opened his Mouth, and said, Of a Truth, I perceive that God is no Respector of Persons : But in every Nation, he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him.* Till this happen'd, he, tho' fill'd with the Holy Ghost, confin'd Salvation to the Name of a Person ; viz. the Name of Christ. *There is none other Name under Heaven given amongst Men, whereby we must be saved.*

Acts 4. 12.

HAD there been but one Language, and a Book writ in that Language, in indelible Characters, (so that there cou'd be none of those thirty thousand various Readings, which are own'd to be crept into the New Testament) and all cou'd have Access to it ; yet even then, considering how uncertain the Meaning of Words are ; and the Interest of designing Men, to put a wrong Sense on them ; it must be morally impossible this Religion cou'd long continue the same. And,

On Galat. 1. “ IF, as St. Jerom says, a false Interpretation of the Gospel of Christ, may make it become the Gospel of Men, “ nay, which is worse, of Devils ; ” how can they, who, not understanding the Original, must trust to the Interpretation of Others, be certain ; had they not a sufficient inward Light to direct them, what Doctrines are from God, what from Men, and what from Devils ?

Is it not notorious, that Popish Priests, not to mention other persecuting Priests, have propagated such destructive
Notions,

Notions, as if the Devil himself had been to contrive a Religion, he cou'd not have invented more pernicious ?

WORDS are the arbitrary Marks of Mens Ideas, and the Meaning of Words, as well as the Words themselves, are perpetually changing ; and 'tis as impossible to fix one as the other. We see by the innumerable verbal Disputes, which happen even among learned Men, how different their Ideas are ; and perhaps, there are not three Persons, who, when they talk abstractedly, have precisely the same Ideas, tho' they use the same Words. No One can doubt of this, who considers how much the Divines of the same Church differ in explaining what they mean by *Divine Person*, *Essence*, *Trinity*, *Messiah*, *Incarnation*, *Hypostatical Union*, *Original Sin*, *Satisfaction*, *Justification*, *Predestination*, *Grace*, *Free-will*, and all other Technical Terms, if I may so call them. Bishop *Taylor* quotes *Osander* for saying, " There are twenty several Opinions concerning *Justifica-* Polem. Disc.
" *tion*, all drawn from the Scriptures by the Men only of P. 452.
" the *Augustine* Confession ; and there are sixteen several
" Opinions concerning *Original Sin* ; and as many Distinc-
" tions of the *Sacraments* as there are Sects of Men that
" disagree about them.

THAT excellent Critick *Daille* says, " We have, in- Daille de Usu.
" deed, these Words *Pope*, *Patriarch*, *Mass*, *Oblation*, *Sta-* Patrum. l. 1.
" *tion*, *Procession*, *Mortal Sins*, *Penance*, *Confession*, *Satis-* c. 5. p. 149.
" *faction*, *Merit*, *Indulgence*, as the Ancients had, and make
" use of an infinite Number of the like Terms ; but un-
" derstand them in a Sense almost as far different from
" theirs, as our Age is remov'd from theirs.

To give one remarkable Instance of this Nature, the primitive Fathers did not believe a Spirit to be immaterial ; but only a thinner Sort of Body : And this they did

not only apply to the Souls of Men and Angels, (who, they suppos'd, lay with Women, and got Children in Abundance ;) but they thought that God himself was corporeal.

Cotell. Not. *Melito*, who was believ'd to be a Prophet, and flourish'd
ad Script.
Apost. p. 429. about 170, wrote a Book about the *Imbodied God*. And
Tertul. adver. *Tertullian* says, *Quis negabit Deum corpus esse, etsi Deus Spi-*
Prax. c. 7. *ritus est ?* And again, *Nihil incorporale nisi quod non est.*
De Carne
Christi. c. 11. And St. *Hilary*, even in the fourth Century affirms, *There's*
& adver. Her- *nothing but what is corporeal.* And 'tis very probable, that
mo. c. 35. from some Words of our Saviour, they thought that a *Spi-*
See *Dauila de*
Ufu Patrum. *rit was a thinner Sort of Body, that cou'd be seen, but not*
l. 2. c. 4. *felt.* And from St. *Paul's* saying, *In him dwelleth the Ful-*
p. 260. & 268. *ness of the Godhead bodily*, and talking in several other Places of
Colof. 2. 9. *a spiritual Body*, they concluded that That was the same with
a bodily Spirit ; tho' our Divines now very well know how to
distinguish between *a bodily Spirit* and *a spiritual Body*.

IN short, there are scarce any Words in any one Language, except of such Things as immediately strike the Senses, that are adequately answer'd in another, so as exactly to comprehend the same Ideas ; and if the Ideas are only fewer, or more, what Confusion may not that occasion ? How great, and frequent must the Mistakes then be, in translating the antiquated Languages of People, who liv'd at a vast Distance of Time, as well as in Countries far remote ; and affected hyperbolical, parabolical, mystical, allegorical, and typical Ways of expressing themselves, as opposite to the Usage in other Parts, as *East* is to *West* ? And not only this, but it will be likewise necessary to have an accurate Knowledge of their Manners, Customs, Traditions, Philosophy, Religious Notions, Sects, Civil and Ecclesiastical Polity ; of all which the common People know as little, as they do of the Original Languages ; who having
very

very obscure, and incompetent Conceptions of the principal Words, and Phrases us'd in the Versions, their Religion must needs be a very odd Jumble of confus'd and inconsistent Notions, were it to depend on Words, and their precise Meaning; and not on the Things themselves, and their Relations, which are plain and obvious to common Capacities; they wou'd be in a Manner intirely govern'd by Sounds; some of which, such, as they us'd to hear spoken of with Respect, they wou'd highly reverence; while others, tho' of the same Signification, they wou'd as much abhor, till Custom had made them familiar. And,

WERE Men not to be govern'd by Things, but Words, the Consequence now wou'd be much worse than what happen'd on the Confusion of Languages at *Babel*; because no written Religion, for Want of an universal Language, cou'd become universal; and People must, without a competent Skill in dead Languages, be oblig'd to take their Religion on Trust, from Men too, as subject to be deceiv'd, as they are often ready to deceive: Nay, the Universality of Language, cou'd it have preserv'd Religion uncorrupt, wou'd have done so in the *Antidiluvian* World, and before that Confusion of Language, which happen'd at *Babel*.

If Skill in Languages cou'd make even the Learned certain, how comes it to pass, that what goes for Orthodox in one Age, shall be Heterodox in another? What is fundamental in one Church, be damnable Error in another? Nay, must not every One, if at all vers'd in Church-History, say with Mr. *Chillingworth*? “ I see plain, and with my own
 “ Eyes, that there are Popes against Popes, Councils against
 “ Councils; some Fathers against others; the same Fathers
 “ against themselves; a Consent of Fathers of one Age,
 “ against a Consent of Fathers of another Age; the Church

Relig. of Protestants. c. 5, Sect. 56. p. 290.

“ of one Age, against the Church of another Age ? ” And do not the Clergy themselves think there’s such Uncertainty in the Scripture-Language, even in Things of the greatest Moment ; when they generally use unscriptural Terms to express those Things ? And that they can’t even here agree among themselves, there needs no better Proof than the Disputes of our Divines about Fundamentals ; tho’ they are, to prevent all Controversies of this Nature, enacted, guarded with penal Laws, and all the Clergy, at every Turn, oblig’d to subscribe ’em in the same Words. And,

I cou’d name Two eminent Bishops, who, if they were to give a true Account of their religious Tenents, ’tis thought, wou’d appear to differ very widely, even in what themselves term Fundamentals. But are not such Differences utterly unavoidable, as long as Men found their Religion on Words and Phrases thus dubious ; and not on the eternal Reason, and unalterable Relations of Things, obvious to the meanest Capacity ?

NOTWITHSTANDING the wide Difference there is between all Christian Sects, from the *Papist* down to the *Quaker* ; I can’t help thinking, that an infinitely wise and good God has adapted the Rules and Evidences, of what he really requires from Mankind, to their general Capacity ; and that the Certainty of every Command, must be equal to the Importance of the Duty. How can we suppose some of the most necessary Duties of Religion, are only to be found in voluminous Books, which the greatest Part of Mankind have, perhaps, never heard of ; and of those that have, not one in a thousand understands a Tittle of the Languages they are writ in ; or is capable of examining into those Records, from which the Authority of these Books are to be deriv’d ?

Is

Is not that an admirable *Hypothesis*, which, tho' it supposes God has endow'd Mankind with Reason to enable them to distinguish between Religion and Superstition; yet admits that almost all Mankind are incapable of doing it, but must alike, in all Countries, depend on the Authority of Men, hir'd to maintain the traditional Religion of the Places where they live; who, perhaps, will tell them, that there was a Time (happy those who liv'd in it) when Religion was suited to the Capacities of the Vulgar; being preach'd by inspir'd Men in the Languages they understood, and Miracles for their Conviction wrought in their Sight; but that now the Scene was entirely chang'd, they had no Miracles, no infallible Men to have Recourse to, to set them right; and that their Religion by Distance of Time was not only become obscure, but that the whole of it, and the Proofs on which its Validity depends, are writ in Languages, of which the People understand not a Word; and that "the Evidence Bp of London's
 " arising from particular Types and Prophecies, is now, by Past. Lett. p. 20, 21.
 " Length of Time, and Distance of Place, and Change of
 " Customs, become obscure and difficult to the Generality
 " of People, and cannot be thoroughly discuss'd without a
 " great Variety of Knowledge concerning the ancient Jew-
 " ish Customs, and the Authority of their Writings, and the
 " exact Calculation of Time." Which is Effect to suppose; that the Religion of the Vulgar must consist, in taking the Words of their Teachers, however divided among themselves, for the Word of God; and their Translations, for Law and Gospel; and that believing in them, is having a divine Faith; tho' One would think, whatever depended on human Traditions, and Translations, cou'd be but a human Faith.

B. THO' something of this Nature is unavoidable, where Religion is writ in antiquated Languages; yet in the main, are we not now more certain of the Truth of our traditional Religion, than those who liv'd in former Ages; we having the Authority of every past Age in Confirmation of its Truth?

l. 4. c. 16.
Sect. 10. p.
322, at p. 562.

A. MR. Lock, speaking concerning *Assent* in Matters, wherein Testimony it made use of, *says*, " I think, it may
" not be amiss to take Notice of a Rule observ'd in the Law
" of *England*; which is, That tho' the attested Copy of a
" Record be good Proof, yet the Copy of a Copy never so
" well attested, and by never so credible Witnesses, will not
" be admitted as a Proof in Judicature. This is so gene-
" rally approv'd as reasonable, and suited to the Wisdom
" and Caution to be used in our Enquiry after material
" Truths, That I never yet heard of any One that blamed
" it. This Practice, if it be allowable in the Decisions of
" Right and Wrong, carries this Observation along with it;
" *viz.* That any Testimony, the further off it is from the
" original Truth, the less Force and Proof it has. The
" Being and Existence of the Thing itself, is what I call
" the original Truth. A credible Man vouching his Know-
" ledge of it, is a good Proof: But if another, equally cre-
" dible, do witness it from his Report, the Testimony is
" weaker; and a third that attests the Hear-say of an Hear-
" say, is yet less considerable. So that in *Traditional Truths*,
" each Remove weakens the Force of the Proof. And the more
" Hands the Tradition has successively passed through, the
" less Strength and Evidence does it receive from them."
" — This is certain, that what in one Age was affirmed
" upon slight Grounds, can never after come to be more
" valid in future Ages, by being often repeated?" I hope
You

ib. p. 383.
at. p. 563.
Sect. 11.

You will pardon me, if I presume to think, that God, at all Times, is so good and impartial, that his Will, on which the Happiness of Mankind at all Times depends, is at all Times equally knowable; and consequently, must be founded on what is always alike discernable; the Nature and Reason of Things: Can a Religion, design'd for every One, not be within the Reach of every One? Or can That, which above all Things it concerns ALL Men to know, not be knowable by ALL?

— *id, quod*

Æque pauperibus prodest, locupletibus æque;
Æque neglectum pueris senibusque nocbit.
Hoc opus, hoc studium parvi properemus & ampli;
Si patriæ volumus, si nobis vivere cari.

Hor. l. 1,
Ep. 1. 24.

Ib. Ep. 3, 28.

AND certainly, nothing can be a greater Libel on the True Religion; than to suppose it does not contain such internal Marks, as will, even to the meanest Capacity, distinguish it from all false Religions; so as that a Man, tho' unable to read in his Mother-Tongue, may, without pinning his Faith on any Sett of Priests, know what God requires of him.

I have said nothing of the Plainness, Simplicity, and even Universality of Religion, but what is agreeable to the Description, which St. Paul, from the Prophet *Jeremiah*, gives of the Gospel Dispensation; the express Terms of which run thus, *I will put my Laws into their Mind, and* Heb. 8. 10, *write them in their Hearts; and I will be unto them a God,* Jer. 31. 33, 34, *and they shall be to me a People: And they shall not teach every Man his Neighbour, and every Man his Brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.* As these Words are too plain to need a Comment,
so

so I shall defer drawing any Consequences from them, till I have first endeavour'd to free the Scripture from that Obscurity, in which artful Men have involv'd it. And,

I shall, now, by Way of Recapitulation, mention what Mr. *Barbeyrac*, a Person of no small Note in the learned World, says concerning the *Practical Science of Morality*;

Historical and
Critical Ac-
count of the
Science of Mo-
rality, in his
prefatory Dis-
course to Mr.
Puffendorf, of
the Law of Na-
ture and Na-
tions, Engl.
Transl. Sect.
1, p. 1, col. 1,
2.

“ None can reasonably doubt, but that every Man, who
“ will be happy, must needs, in Order to make himself so,
“ regulate his Conduct after some certain Manner; and that
“ God, as the Author and Parent of all human Race, does
“ prescribe to all Men without Exception, the Duties which
“ tend to procure them that Happiness, which they so pas-
“ sionately seek after. Now, from hence it necessarily fol-
“ lows, that the natural Principles of this Science are such
“ as may be easily discover'd; and such too, as are propor-
“ tionate to the Capacities of all Sorts of Persons: So that
“ to be instructed in this Science, there will be no Occasion
“ to mount up to Heaven; or to have from thence any ex-
“ traordinary Revelation for that Purpose. — It must be
“ own'd, to the eternal Glory of the supreme Legislator of
“ Mankind, as well as to the utter Confusion of themselves;
“ that none can complain without Injustice, that God has
“ given him Laws, either impracticable, or environ'd with
“ such Obscurity, as cannot be penetrated by one who really
“ has his Duty at Heart, notwithstanding all his Pains and
“ Application. This the wisest Heathens have acknow-
“ ledg'd; — (and) the *Stoicks*, who made Morality their prin-
“ cipal Study, maintain'd, that their Philosophy was not above
“ the Reach of Women and Slaves; and that as the Way
“ to Virtue lies open to all Men without Distinction; so
“ there is no Estate, or Condition, with peculiar Privi-
“ ledges exclusive of others, as to the Faculty of knowing
“ the

“ the Principles and Rules, as well of those Duties which
 “ are common to all ; as of those which belong to each par-
 “ ticular. — The Idea of a Creator, boundless in Power, Sect. 3. p. 10.
 “ Wisdom and Goodness ; and the Idea of ourselves, as in- cc. 2.
 “ telligent, reasonable, and sociable Creatures : These two
 “ Ideas, I say, if well look’d into, and compar’d together
 “ in their whole Extent, will always furnish us with steady
 “ Grounds of Duty, and sure Rules of Conduct ; notwith-
 “ standing it may sometimes so fall out, that, for Want of
 “ Care and Attention, we may, in some uncommon Cases,
 “ not know how to apply them ; or cannot methodically
 “ demonstrate the necessary Connexion of some remote Con-
 “ sequences, with the first Principles of Morality. — Sect. 32, p. 87.
 “ ’Tis certain, that the intire Conformity of the Christian 88.
 “ Morality, with the clearest Dictates of right Reason ; is
 “ one of the most convincing Proofs of the Divinity of the
 “ Christian Religion ; as has been acknowledg’d by all, who
 “ have wrote with any Solidity on that Subject. — And
 “ if we duly weigh, and consider it, we shall find, that
 “ this is the Proof, which of all others is the most affect-
 “ ing ; and the best proportion’d to the common Capacities
 “ of the Bulk of Mankind. — [Who] When they come
 “ at length to consider the Evangelical Morality, and find
 “ it intirely conformable both to their true Interests ; and
 “ to all those Principles, of which every Man has by Na-
 “ ture the Seeds in his own Heart ; they cannot then help
 “ concluding, that the Author of it must necessarily be that
 “ very Being, who has giv’n Life, and brought ’em into
 “ this World only to make ’em happy ; provided they will
 “ not be wanting to themselves, but contribute on their
 “ Part, all that lies in their own Power, towards the At-
 “ tainment of their own Felicity.

I might here commend to your Perusal, what he, in several Sections, affirms of the “ Extreme Negligence of
 Sect. 12 p. 36. “ the *Publick Ministers of Religion*, in cultivating the Science
 col. 1, 2. “ of Morality ; which, *as he says*, being by them almost
 “ banish’d out of the World, took Sanctuary among the
 “ Laicks, or undignify’d Men of Letters ; who gave it a
 Sect. 11. p. 36. “ much better Reception. — No sooner did that admi-
 col. 2. “ rable Treatise of *Grotius*, of *The Right of War and*
 “ *Peace*, appear in the World, but the Ecclesiasticks, in-
 “ stead of returning Thanks to the Author for it, every
 “ Where declar’d against him ; and his Book was not only
 “ put into the expurgatory Index of the *Roman Catholick*
 “ Inquisitors, but many, even *Protestant* Divines, labour’d
 “ to cry it down. And thus it far’d too with Mr. *Puffen-*
 “ *dorff’s* Book of *The Law of Nature and Nations* ; the
 “ *Jesuits* at *Vienna* caus’d it to be prohibited ; and many
 “ *Protestant* Divines, both of *Sueden* and *Germany*, did
 “ their best, to make this excellent Work share every
 “ where else the same Fate ?

B. If these great Men were thus dealt with, for setting the *Science of Morality* in its due Light ; can You, who place Religion in the Practice of Morality in Obedience to the Will of God ; and suppose there can be no other Distinction between Morality and Religion, than that the former is acting according to the Reason of Things consider’d in themselves ; the other, acting according to the same Reason of Things consider’d as the Will of God ? Can You, I say, hope to escape being pelted by some of the same Profession for such a Crime as This ?

A. THAT, I must own, wou’d be a Favour I neither hope, nor wish for ; since I am sensible, the shewing Religion to be no arbitrary Institution, but founded on the
 Na-

Nature of Things, and their Relations, obvious to the Capacity of all that dare use their Reason ; must provoke all Ecclesiasticks of what Denomination soever, who expect a blind Submission from the Laity ; tho' was it not for the Authority that the High Church Clergy among the Reform'd lay Claim to, when from *Protestant* Principles they draw *Papish* Conclusions ; the Pretences of the *Papish* Priests for the Necessity of *an Infallible Guide*, would appear ridiculous.

THE Substance of what the *Papists* say, is, in short,
 “ That if the Principles of *Protestants*, relating to private Judgment, are true, the Bulk of Mankind can't
 “ go beyond such plain Rules of Religion, as carry their
 “ own Evidence with them ; since otherwise they would
 “ be oblig'd to admit Things, about which they are incapable of judging ?

“ IF the Religion of Peasants and Mechanicks, Men
 “ and Maid-Servants, the ignorant and illiterate, must depend on Books written in antiquated Languages, of
 “ which they understand not one Word ; and are incapable of judging of the historical Evidences of remote
 “ Facts, on which the Authority of those Books is founded ;
 “ nor can know whether a Religion thus founded, has been
 “ faithfully convey'd down to them ; must they not either be
 “ of that traditional Religion, which obtains in the Country
 “ where they live, (as none is without one) ? Or else
 “ must there not be some Persons appointed to judge for
 “ them in Matters of Religion, in whose Determination
 “ they may safely acquiesce ? If this be *Popery*, there can
 “ be no Mean between Popery and Natural Religion.

“ IF, in the earliest Times, Christians were split
 “ into many Sects, and each Sect had their particular

" Scriptures ; are the common Christians now (when all
 " the historical Evidence is lost but of one Side only, and
 " That too they understand not) competent Judges in this
 " Matter ? Or to condescend to Particulars, are they ca-
 " pable of judging in the Controversies between *Catholicks*
 " and *Protestants*, about the Number of Canonical Books,
 " Oral Tradition, the Authority of the Church, the un-
 " interrupted Succession, and a thousand other Things ; es-
 " pecially such as relate to Mysteries ; about which they
 " are so far from being competent Judges, that they are
 " not capable of understanding even the Terms, in which
 " the Learned choose to express themselves, when they en-
 " deavour to explain their inexplicable Mysteries ?

" OUGHT not the illiterate, if they had a just Sense
 " of their own Ignorance, to have been frightened, upon
 " their pretended Reformation, at the very Thoughts of
 " leaving a Church, to which their Ancestors had been so
 " long united ; (and which most of their Adversaries own'd
 " to be a true Church, and deriv'd their Authority from
 " her ;) upon the Account of Opinions, they were no more
 " capable of judging ; than they were of judging, after they
 " had left the Church, to which of the numerous Sects
 " they shou'd join themselves ?

" ALL *Protestant* Churches, have taken the same
 " Methods to make People pay an absolute Submission
 " to their Decision, as the Church of *Rome*, by excom-
 " municating, and condemning, when they had Power,
 " to perpetual Imprisonment ; or otherwise punishing those
 " who wou'd not renounce their private Opinions, when
 " contrary to their Decisions ; which is either condemning
 " their own Principles, or their own Practices so directly
 " opposite to their Principles ; but if this Power of judging
 " for

“ for the People is, as the Protestant Clergy pretend, so necessary to preserve Unity, that it must belong to every particular, and *Protestant Church*, tho’ founded on the Breach of Catholick Unity ; how came the Church itself, before the pretended *Reformation*, to want this Power so necessary to preserve itself ?

B. Protestant Divines, when press’d on this Head, usually distinguish between a just Authority, and an absolute Authority.

A. CAN the Church of *Rome*, say its *Votaries*, claim a greater Authority, than the Church of *England* does in her *Canons* of 1603 ; where she declares, “ All are *ipso facto* Can. 3. excommunicate, who shall affirm She is not an Orthodox and Apostolical Church ; not to be absolv’d, but by the Archbishop, after having publicly renounc’d this their impious Error ; and after the same Manner excommunicates “ All, who shall affirm the *Articles* of 1562, made Can. 5. to avoid Diversity of Opinions, *ulla ex parte supersticiosos aut erroneos existere* ; “ All that speak against Can. 6, &c. her Rites and Cereemonies, or condemn her Ordination, and her Discipline (tho’ she herself complains of Communion. Want of godly Discipline) by *Bishops, Déans, Archdeacons, &c.* ; All *Schismaticks*, and all Congrégations not establish’d by Law, if they assume to themselves the Name of a *True, and Lawful Church* : ” Does not this, say the *Papists*, shew, That tho’ the Principles of the Church of *England* were *anti-popish* ; yet that her Practices, her Laws Civil as well as Ecclesiastical, before the *Revolution*, were popish ; since the See Mr. Lock’s 3^d Letter for Toleration. Laws against all *Separatists* then extended to the Loss, not only, of Estate and Liberty ; but even of Life C. 4. D. 126 itself ?

FROM

FROM these, and such like Reasons, the *Papists* concluded, that if the People are oblig'd to go a Step beyond the plain and obvious Rules of Natural Religion, there is, in the Judgment of all Churches whatever, a Necessity for them to have Recourse to Others to judge for them; unless there are to be as many Religions as Judges.

B. How did our Reformers answer these Objections?

A. THEY being chiefly concern'd for the Authority of the Scripture, and withal willing in their Disputes with the *Papists* to support private Judgment, *said*, "That the Scriptures themselves, from their innate Evidence, and by the Illumination of the same holy Spirit which indited them, sufficiently shew'd themselves to be the Will of God."

THE *Dutch* Confession publish'd in 1566, in the Name of the *Belgian* Churches, after having recited a Catalogue of the Books of Scripture, *says*, "These we receive as the only sacred and canonical Books; not because the Church receives them as such; but because the holy Spirit witnesses to our Consciences, that they proceed from God; and themselves testify their Authority."

THE *Gallican* Churches, in their Confession, go somewhat further, not only "declaring their Faith in the Scriptures, to depend on the Testimony of the internal Persuasion of the Spirit; but that thereby they know the Canonical from the Ecclesiastical, *i. e.* Apocryphal Books. And,

THE Assembly of Divines at *Westminster*, maintain'd, that "Our full Persuasion and Assurance of the infallible Truth thereof (the Scriptures); is from the inward Work of the Holy Spirit, bearing Witness by, and with the Words in our Hearts."

As



As to foreign Divines, I shall only mention that great Reformer *Calvin*, who *says*, “ All must allow, that there
 “ are in the Scriptures manifest Evidences of God speaking
 “ in them. — The Majesty of God in them will pre-
 “ sently appear to every impartial Examiner, which will
 “ extort our Assent: So that they act preposterously, who
 “ endeavour by any Argument to beget a solid Credit to the
 “ Scriptures. — The Word will never meet with Credit
 “ in Mens Minds, till it be seal’d by the internal Testimony
 “ of the Spirit who wrote it.

Institut. Christ. Relig. l. 1. c. 7. Sc&.

4. 5.

OUR learned *Whittaker*, in his Controversy about the Scripture against *Bellarmino*, gives this Account of the Doctrines of the Church; “ The Sum, *says he*, of our Opin-
 “ ion is, that the Scriptures have all their Authority and
 “ Credit from themselves; that they are to be acknowledg’d
 “ and receiv’d, not because the Church has appointed or
 “ commanded so, but because they came from God; but
 “ that they came from God, cannot be certainly known by
 “ the Church, but from the Holy Ghost? And,

Controv. de Script. Quest. 3. c. 1. p. 286.

INDEED, our Church supposes no Man can be a good Christian, without being inspir’d; by saying, *Works done be-
 fore the Grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are
 not pleasing to God: — yea, — we doubt not, but that they
 have the Nature of Sin.* And,

Artic. 13.

As to the *Dissenters*, I shall only quote *Dr. Owen*, a Man not long since very eminent among them, who is as zealous in maintaining this Opinion as any of the first Reformers; his Words are, “ The Scriptures of the Old and New Testa-
 “ ment do abundantly, and uncontrollably manifest them-
 “ selves to be the Word of the living God; so that merely
 “ on the Account of their own Proposal to us, in the Name
 “ and Majesty of God as such, without the Contribution
 of

Dr. Owen's Dif. of the div. Orig. of the Script. c. 2. Sect. 5. & c. 4. 5.

“ of Help, or Assistance from Tradition, Church, or any
 “ Thing else without themselves, we are oblig’d upon the
 “ Penalty of eternal Damnation, to receive them with that
 “ Subjection of Soul, which is due to the Word of God.
 “ The Authority of God shining in them, they afford unto
 “ us all the divine Evidence of themselves, which God is
 “ willing to grant us, or can be granted to us, or is any
 “ Way needful for us.” And lest the *Quakers* should take
 it amiss, if while I quote other Sects, I shou’d overlook them;

Prop. 3. p. 70. *R. Barclay* says, “ How necessary ’tis to seek the Certainty
 “ of the Scripture from the Spirit, the infinite Janglings,
 “ and endless Contests of those who seek their Authority
 “ elsewhere, do witness to the Truth thereof:” And then
 proceeds to prove those infinite Janglings, and endless Con-
 tests.

THE Reform’d wou’d have argu’d unanswerably, had
 they contented themselves with saying, that there are no
 Doctrines of a divine Original contain’d in the Gospel Dis-
 pensation, but what by their innate Excellency are knowable
 to be such; as being *writ in our Minds*, and *put into our*
Hearts by God himself; as is expressly declar’d by the Pro-
 phet *Jeremiah*, and repeated and reasserted by the Apostle,
 and by Christ himself. But,

Jer. 31. 33.
 Heb. 10. 16.
 John 6. 45.

OUR Divines, it seems, at last found out, that the Re-
 formers, and their Successors, had embrac’d Christianity on
 such Grounds, as they believ’d wou’d equally serve any other
 Religion, where there was a strong Persuasion; and being
 zealous for certain Things, which do not carry any internal
 Marks of their Truth, or in other Words, of being *taught*
of God, they fell into strange Inconsistencies; sometimes
 talking like *Hobbits*, of the Power of the Magistrate; some-
 times like *Papists*, of the Authority of the Church in re-
 ligious

ligious Matters; and sometimes maintaining both, and private Judgment too, in the same Discourse, if not in the same Section; which made their Adversaries treat them as a Pack of tricking, chicaning Wretches, who had no Regard to Truth, or Consistency, or any Thing but their private Interest.

THE Opinion, now, which seems to be espous'd by some, who wou'd be thought the only True Church-men, is, what the late learned Dr. *Rogers* maintains; who, tho' he agrees with the *Papists*, that the People are incapable of judging for themselves in most Points of Religion; yet, to do him Justice, he puts the Church of *Rome* but upon a Level with all other Churches of what Religion soever, that chance to be uppermost; for he lays it down as a Principle, "That tho' no Man ought upon any Authority to
Pref. to Dr. Rogers's 8 Ser.
 "believe Contradictions, or profess an Assent to evident
p. 53, 54.
 "Falshoods, yet in Questions, where he must in the Event
 "be determin'd by some Authority or other, may reasonably prefer the Authority appointed by publick Wisdom,
 "and may justly be requir'd so to do. — "The Bulk of
Ib. p. 55.
 "Mankind are manifestly unable to form a Judgment either of the Arguments by which he (his Antagonist) endeavours to subvert our Religion, or establish his own; whether they adhere to us, or go to him, they must unavoidably rely on his, or our Authority for the Truth of the Suggestions on which their Conclusion depends; and we presume our Word will go as far as his." This is Asserting that People are oblig'd to take their Religion on Trust, and then to change it as often as there's any Change in the State-Religion; or as often as they change their Residence; and in all these Changes to be govern'd by Men, who are hir'd not to find out Truth; but to make that Re-

ligion, to which their Preferments are annex'd, to pass for true. And if People will not be govern'd, the Legislature, or in the Doctor's Phrase, *Publick Wisdom may justly require them so to do*. Nor is the Matter mended, by excepting Contradictions and evident Falshoods; since here too, if private Persons and Authority differ, publick Wisdom will certainly be on the Side of the Authority it sets up; and 'tis in such Things that the publick Wisdom in most Christian Countries has exerted itself with the utmost Cruelty. So that the whole Question between the *Papist* and the Doctor (both Sides agreeing that Men can't believe Contradictions and evident Falshoods; and that there are Things, which the People are incapable of knowing, or if known, can't judge whether they are true or not;) is, on whom the People in these Points must pin their Faith? Whether there are certain standing Judges appointed by Christ, who shall infallibly lead them into the Truth? Or whether in every Christian Country, the People are bound to be of the Religion of those fallible, not to say, self-interested Guides, Publick Wisdom has authoris'd. Here it must be confess'd, the Doctor is against the Pope of *Rome*, but 'tis to set himself up in his stead; and he accordingly maintains, that those who are committed to his Care, are in Things of which they can't judge, to follow his Judgment; and says, "tho' he may mistake, and in Consequence of it mislead them; yet they will have this Defence before Christ, That they have sought his Will in the Methods which he has directed; and, where they wanted a Guide, preferr'd one appointed to that Office according to his Institution." But why may not a Parish-Priest appointed by Publick Wisdom in *North-Britain*, *France*, or any other Country, say the same to People incapable of judging in these Points?

Vindic. of Civil Establish.
P. 205.

Is not this supposing, that the Christian Religion in many Points, is so fram'd, that in every Parish the People must follow the Judgment of their Parish-Priest; because they are to seek (and what more can be requir'd of them) Christ's Will in the Manner the Parish-Priest tells them Christ directs. And is not this *Popery*, even worse than *Roman Popery*, as it is setting up a *Pope* in every Parish? And obliging the People as often as any of them change their Parish; or he his Parish, or his Mind; to change their Religion too, in every Thing that is not self-evident, or a manifest Contradiction, in Compliance with their present *Parish-Pope*?

I can't but remark, how good *Wits*, tho' they liv'd in very distant Times, and seem of very different Religions, have luckily hit on the same Thought; I mean *Vergerius*, who, in *Luther's* Days, was *Nuncio* to the *Pope*; and Dr. Rogers, late Chaplain to a *Protestant* King, at the Head of the *Protestant* Interest. The former said to *Luther*, *If you wou'd have had* Father Paul's Hist. of the Council of Trent. p. 75. *any thing innovated in the Faith, in which you were bred up for 35 Years, for your Conscience and Salvation sake, it was sufficient to have kept it to yourself.* The latter asserts, "That in the Christian Religion, the Apostle's Rule is, *Hast thou* Prof. to his 8 Sermon. p. 63. *Faith, have it to thyself?* And yet 'tis plain, the Apostle was persecuted by the *Rogerians* of those Days, for not keeping his Faith to himself.

B. WHATEVER *Vergerius* might deserve from *Popish* Publick Wisdom, for misapplying this Text, to put a Stop to the Reformation; A *Protestant* Divine could deserve nothing but Contempt from *Protestant* publick or private Wisdom, for so notoriously perverting its Meaning, and openly bantering our first Reformers; and not only condemning them, for not keeping their Religion to themselves; but asserting, that all, who (without a special Commission) from

p. 125.

the Beginning of the World to this Day, have “labour’d
 “by publick Preaching, or Writing, to withdraw Mens Sub-
 “mission to the establish’d Religion, whether *Pagan, Ma-*
 “*hometan, or Popish*, and gather Congregations in Opposi-
 “tion to it, contrary to the Command of the Magi-
 “strate;” have been guilty of the damnable Sin of Disobe-
 “dience and Sedition. So that if *Popery* had been establish’d
 by Law in King *James’s* Reign, all *Protestants* must have
 kept their Religion in their own Breasts; since publicly
 professing a Religion can’t but be unlawful, where there’s no
 coming at it, but by unlawful Means. The *Papists*, sure,
 need no other Arguments, to shew the Unlawfulness of the
 Reformation in most Places, than what this Reverend Di-
 vine has furnish’d them with. And tho’ he declares himself
 an Enemy to all Persecution, and owns, “that if there
 “be no publick Worship, there must be all the Appear-
 “ance that can be of absolute Irreligion;” yet the chief
 “Design of his *Vindication of the Civil Establishment* is to
 “prove, that all Magistrates, of what Religion soever,
 “have a Right to oblige all, but those of their own Com-
 “munion, to keep their Religion to themselves.” Which is
 declaring for Persecution as well as Irreligion; since all
 Men believe ’tis their Duty publicly to worship God, tho’
 contrary to all human Commands; and he himself dares not
 say he would obey such Commands.

p. 291

AND his Distinction between Mens acting with, or with-
 out a special Commission, is impertinent in Relation to a
 Magistrate, who owns no such Commission; and the whole
 is inconsistent with that Authority, which, in another Place,
 he gives to the Church or Clergy, of prescribing what Doc-
 trines shall be taught, and what not: But if the Magistrate,
 for the sake of the State, can forbid the publick Profession
 of

of all Religions but one; why not that one? since I believe, there's scarce any Instance where the Profession of but one has been permitted, but that Religion soon degenerated into Priestcraft, to the entire Destruction of Mens Civil Liberties; and the Magistrate, as well as his Subjects, has been forc'd to submit to the arbitrary, and vile Impositions of his own Priests.

In short, this noble Scheme, if there's any Consistency in it, is, that in all Matters of Religion, where People are capable of judging; they must not, if the Magistrate thinks fit, openly profess their Religion; and in all other Things, which depend on Book-Learning, they are to be govern'd by their respective Parish-Popes. And if such a Scheme as This, cou'd recommend the Person that publish'd it, to a much larger Parish-Popedom than he had before; 'tis high Time for the Laity to consider, whether all the Blood and Treasure which have been spent to keep out but one Pope, has not been spent in vain; if, instead of That One, we are now to have thousands?

I do not find, that the Apostles taught there was any Thing in Religion, of which People were incapable of judging; for tho' Men cou'd not well be lower in point of Understanding, than those to whom the Gospel was first preach'd; yet even these are commanded to *judge for themselves; to prove all Things; to take heed to what they hear; to try the Spirits; to avoid false Prophets, Seducers, and blind Guides.* And if this was their Duty in the Apostolick Times, it was, certainly, so in all After-Ages; and if there are now any such Things, by what Authority soever introduc'd, as make the Apostolical Rule impracticable; I shall, with Submission to Dr. Rogers, venture to affirm, they are no Part of the Christian Religion

gion ; and that Those who teach them are *false Prophets, Seducers, and Deceivers* ; and as such, are to be shunn'd by all Christians.

ST. *Chrysostom* thinks Religion so very plain, that he
Hom. 3. on a Thef. To 4. p. 234. Ed. Sav. says, " Were it not for our Sloth, we had no need of Teachers. " And we do not find that even the Fathers thought the People, as not being able to judge for themselves, were to believe in their Parish-Priests. *Lactantius*, for Instance, says, " That in those Things, especially which concern our Life eternal, it becomes every Man to search, and examine the Truth of them by his own Sense and Judgment, rather than to expose himself by a foolish Credulity, to the Hazard of being seduc'd into other Mens Errors. " And St. *Basil*
Basil Mor. Reg. 72. Lo. 2. p. 372. tells us, " It is the Duty of Auditors not to believe implicitly, but to examine the Words of those that instruct them. " And all our Divines, I mean such as are, what they pretend, *Protestants* ; shew they have not so mean an Opinion of the Understanding of the People, by frequently exhorting them *to judge for themselves* ; and telling them, " They have no Reason to expect Heaven, if they will not be at the Pains of examining what would bring them thither ; and that the Luckiness of the Accident, shou'd they stumble on Truth, wou'd not atone for the Neglect of this grand Duty.

A judicious Divine of our Church very justly observes
Claudian's Persuasive to an ingenious Tryal of Opinions in Religion. p. 25. " That they, who have a good Cause, need no disingenuous Arts ; they will not fright Men from considering what their Adversaries say, by denouncing Damnation against them ; nor forbid them to read their Books, but rather encourage them so to do ; that they may see the Difference between Truth and Falshood, between Reason and Sophistry,

“ phistry, with their own Eyes. — And whensoever
 “ Guides of a Party do otherwise, they give just Cause to
 “ those who follow them to examine their Doctrines so
 “ much the more carefully, by how much they are unwill-
 “ ling to have them examin’d. ’Tis a bad Sign, when Men
 “ are loth to have their Opinions seen in the Day, but *love*
 “ *Darkness rather than Light.*

THE Fault of the People, even from the Beginning, has
 been, as the memorable Mr. *Hales* observes, that “ They, ^{Traff of}
 “ thro’ Sloth and blind Obedience, examin’d not the Things ^{Schism,}
 “ they were taught ; but, like Beasts of Burden, patiently
 “ couch’d down, and indifferently underwent whatever
 “ their Superiors laid upon them.

HAPPY wou’d the Laity have been, if they had giv’n no
 just Occasion for this infamous Character ; tho’ if they had
 follow’d the Example of their Clergy in this one Thing, of
 being as true to their common Interest ; as these have al-
 ways been to the separate Interest of their own Order ;
 That alone wou’d have preserv’d Religion in its native Sim-
 plicity ; as being a Thing wholly design’d for their general
 Good ; and then it wou’d have been out of the Power of
 the Priests to corrupt it.

B. Is not this supposing, most, if not all, the Corruptions
 of Religion, which have prevail’d in any Church, are owing
 to their Impositions, and the blind Deference of the Laity ?

A. If You think I speak this without just Grounds,
 examine into the present, and past State of *Christendom* ;
 and see whether all those gross Depravations, and Perver-
 sions of Religion, which have prevail’d in most Places,
 were not contriv’d to advance the separate Interests of
 the Ecclesiasticks ; and Religion been corrupted, in an
 exact Proportion to the Number, Riches, Influence, and
 Power.

Power of these Reverend Gentlemen? Now these Corruptions being calculated for their Interest, cou'd a Majority without a *Miracle*, (as Bishop *Burnet* says, in relation to our *Reformation*) agree in correcting those Abuses? And I may add, that in all Countries, where People have not had the Liberty to judge for themselves in religious Matters, no other Liberty has been preserv'd; but Men have been Slaves both in Body and Mind: Such Power has the united Force of Ecclesiasticks!

Introduc^d. to
his Expositⁿ. of
the Art^e p. 5.

Of the true
Grounds of
Ecc^l. Regi-
men. p. 84.

A Judicious Author says, "It was not unreasonable in the Beginning of the Reign of *Edward VI.* and Queen *Elizabeth*, to think the Lords and Commons better Judges of Religion than the Bishops and Convocation. The whole Body can have no sinister Interest to blind them; but the whole Clergy, which is but a Part of the whole Body, may; and therefore the whole Body is to judge of this. The meanest Man is as much interested, and concern'd in the Truth of Religion, as the greatest Priest; for tho' his Knowledge thereof be not in all Respects equally easy, yet in some Respects it may be easier. For Want of Learning does not so much hinder the Light of the Layman, as wordly Advantage and Faction sometimes does the Priest; and the Examples of these are infinite. Corruption in the Church before our Saviour, and in our Saviour's Days, and ever since; has oftner begun among the greatest Priests, Rabbies, and Bishops, than among the meanest Laity.

WHAT St. Paul says to the Christians of *Corinth*, in relation to false Apostles, has been verifi'd in all Ages:

2^d. Cor. 11. 19. Ye suffer Fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. —
Ye suffer if a Man bring you into Bondage; if a Man devour you, if a Man take of you, if a Man exalt himself,

self, if a Man smite you on the Face. And, indeed, the *Laicks* have so seldom thought of asserting their Natural Rights in religious Matters, that they have generally sacrific'd to the Malice of the Priests, all, who have endeavour'd to maintain these Rights; and if the People threw off one Set of Ecclesiastical Tyrants, 'twas only to be Slaves to another; and were ever ready to join against any one, that endeavour'd to set them free from all Ecclesiastical Tyranny; under which the whole Christian World wou'd still have groan'd, had not so many Accidents concurr'd at the *Reformation*.

WE pray against being *led into Temptation*; but do we not lead the Clergy into almost irresistible Temptation, to impose what they please on the People? What may not Men, who, in a Manner, engross the Teaching of the Young, and Instructing the Old; and have great Powers, and vast Revenues, and those too daily encreasing; bring about by their joint Endeavours; and that much more easily, than when they had nothing to depend on but the Alms of the People? What is it, that such a Confederacy, so modell'd, may not effect; especially where they are caress'd by all Parties; nay, even by That, which is by too many of them despis'd, and hated for their unpardonable Crime of being against Persecution? Are the Clergy less selfish, and designing, than they were in those Times some call the *purest*? Or, are the Laity grown wiser, and by the Experience of so many Ages, more upon their Guard?

PEOPLE Abroad were surpris'd to find a Nation, in former Times so miserably oppress'd by the Ecclesiasticks, capable, even under a *Whigg* Administration, of repealing that Statute of *Mortmain*; which their Predecessors thought

absolutely necessary to prevent an All-devouring Corporation from swallowing every Thing ; and at the same Time to see the *First-Fruits* and *Tenths*, granted at the *Reformation* to the Crown, as a just Acknowledgement of the Regal Supremacy, to be given for ever to this insatiable Corporation ; and at a Time too, when their Revenues were daily encreasing. These surprising Favours made Foreigners very inquisitive to know, how the Conduct of the Clergy had merited more since the *Revolution*, than it did at the *Restoration* ; or any other Time since the *Reformation* ? But begging Pardon for this necessary Digression, I shall now shew, from the Confession of that great Divine and Philosopher, Dr. *H. More*, how little Reason the Laity, tho' of the meanest Capacity, have to depend upon the Authority of Church-men : His Words are,

“ THERE'S scarce any Church in *Christendom* at this Day, which does not obtrude not only plain Falshoods, but such Falshoods as will appear, to any free Spirit, pure Contradictions and Impossibilities ; and that with the same Gravity, Authority, and Importunity, as they do the holy Oracles of God.” If this be true, what a miserable Condition must the People be in, if they are to depend on this *Gravity*, *Authority*, and *Importunity* of their respective Priests ; who, 'tis possible, may not believe the *Creeeds* and *Articles* they subscribe, and yet be against making the least Change ; for fear of putting the People upon examining into other Things, wherein the Interest of the Clergy is more nearly concern'd ; which may occasion them to assume to themselves the unpardonable Crime of seeing with their own Eyes, and judging with their own Understandings. That *Convocation* very well knew what they did, which in 1689 with so much Indignation

nation rejected those Proposals, that some of our most eminent Divines were by the Crown authoris'd to offer them, for making Alterations in the *Liturgy*; particularly, in leaving the Clergy at Liberty with Relation to the *Athanasian Creed*.

IN short, Whoever in the least reflects, must needs see, that in most Churches, many of their Fundamental Articles are design'd to impose on the credulous Laity; and that the Priests themselves can't believe them. Can the Pope of *Rome* any more believe himself infallible, than the *Tartarian* Pope, or *Lama*, believes himself immortal? Or than *Protestant* Priests (whose Churches are founded on private Judgment) can believe they have a Right to make *Creed*s and *Articles* for the People? Can even the *Romish* Priests any more believe they can pardon Sins, than the *Bonzees* believe the Money they borrow in this World, shall be repaid to their Creditors in the next? Or can the *Popish* Priests, tho' they made the Laity for many Ages renounce their Senses, have different Ideas of the *Bread* and *Wine*, after they have mumbl'd over certain Words, than they had before? Or can the *Lutheran* Priests believe they have the Power of *Consubstantiation*? Or the *Calvinistical* Priests think, they can make the Body and Blood of Christ to be, not figuratively, or, not indeed; but *verily*, and *indeed*, taken by the faithful? Or can any of these Priests believe they give the Holy Ghost? Or that they have an *Indelible Character*? Or that there can be *Imperium in Imperio*? Or can the *Popish* Priests any more believe their *Legendary Traditions*, than the *Pagan* Priests did their Oracles? Or some other Priests the Doctrine of *Passive Obedience*? Or the *Calvinistical* Articles they so solemnly subscribe? Or that

Awes on one Hand, and *Bribes* on the other, is the Way to promote the *Protestant* Principle, of every Man's being oblig'd to judge for himself in all religious Matters, without Prejudice and Partiality? Or an hundred other Things, which, with this same *Gravity*, *Authority*, and *Importunity*, they impose on the People?

If Men, notwithstanding they pretend to be *inwardly mov'd by the Holy Ghost*, go into Orders as they take to a Trade, to make the best of its Mysteries (and all Trades have their Mysteries); and are bound for the sake of their Maintenance, to maintain those Doctrines which *maintain* them; and lest they shou'd not do so, are shackl'd with *Subscriptions* upon *Subscriptions*; can these Men, I say, under all the Prejudices this World affords, be proper Persons for the Laity to depend on in the Choice of their Religion? Or, are they, who are not permitted to choose their own Religion; fit to choose a Religion for others? In this Case, wou'd not *the blind lead the blind into the Ditch of Popery*, &c.? And I think, I may venture to say, that Men may as safely trust the Choice of their Religion to the Chance of a Dye, as to the Chance of Education; considering who, for so many Ages, have had the Cooking up of Religion. And every One must see, that those Things, which are brought into Religion, contrary to the End of it, as they are inconsistent with the Interest of the People; so they favour more of Art and Learning, than to belong to simple Men; especially in those Times they were introduc'd. And as *Adam* said to God, *The Woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the Tree, and I did eat*; so might the People say of their Priests, did they believe them *jure divino*; "The Priests. " thou gavest us, deceiv'd us, and we have been deceiv'd.

B. THIS is too severe.

A. YOU

A. You know, that those few good Men among the Ecclesiasticks, have said as much of their own Body; and therefore, I shall only mention what *Picus Mirandula* had the Courage to say to *Leo* the Tenth, and the *Lateran* Council; he, after having complain'd, that all Orders of Men were debauch'd by the Clergy, says, *Nec Sæ Fascic. Re-*
sane mirum, quando malum omne prodire de Templo Johan-
nes Chrysostomus censet; & Hieronimus scribit, se invenisse^{rum. Expet. & fugiend. to 1 p. 418. 149.}
neminem qui seduxerit Populos, præterquam Sacerdotes. Tho'
'twas not always they cou'd corrupt them; for the celebrated *St. Ambrose* says, *Plerumq; Clerus erravit, Sacer-*
dotis nutavit Sententia, Divites cum seculi istius terreno^{Ambro. Sc: m. 17. To. 4. p. 725.}
rege senserunt, Populus fidem propriam reservavit.

THIS can be no Reflection on the Ecclesiasticks among us, who abhor all these Principles, by which their Predecessors enslav'd Men both Body and Soul; and who maintain no Opinions, however advantageous to the Order, that are against the publick Good; and are so far from promoting Persecution, that by their Example as well as Writings, they have highly contributed to that Humanity, Charity, and Benevolence, which, to the great Grief of others, is daily increasing among Men of the most different Persuasions. Thus, where the Clergy are good, the People of Course will be so; and therefore, such Clergymen (of which, perhaps, we now have more, than have ever been in the Church since *Constantine's* Time;) can't be too much esteem'd, for conquering the strong Prejudice of Education, and the stronger of Interest. And they, certainly, ought to be as much valu'd by the Laity for so unusual a Generosity, in defending the common Rights of Mankind; as they are hated by their Brethren, for giving up those Claims, by which they have at all Times commanded the Purse,

Christianity as old as the Creation. VOL. I.

as well as the Consciences of the People ; when too, they cou'd not but be sensible, what they were to expect from their restless Enemies ; whenever they shou'd be permitted to exert themselves.

AND here I can't omit saying, That, if he, who best defends the Church, best deserves to rule it ; Justice has eminently appear'd in the Promotion of that Person, now happily presiding over it ; who so early put a Stop to the boasted Triumphs of the ablest Adversary our Church ever had ; and has since protected it against its worst, its domestick Enemies, treacherously undermining the Constitution ; who, as he treats all with that condescending Goodness inseparable from true Greatness, so he encourages Piety and Virtue, without Distinction of Parties ; and tho' he has with equal Prudence expos'd both *Popish* and *Protestant Persecution* ; yet both the *Sorbonne* and *Geneva*, however differing in most other Things, agree in owning so illustrious a Merit. And I may challenge all Church-History to show Three such Bishops, as to the Honour of the *Revolution*, have, since that blessed Time, succeeded one another at *Lambeth*.

I must beg your Patience for adding, on this inexhaustable Subject, one Reason more, for Mens being govern'd by Things, rather than Words : It has been a general Practice with the Introducers of Civil Tyranny, tho' they chang'd the Form of Government, to retain the old Names ; the better to hinder People from being sensible of the Change : And may not This have happen'd in Church-Matters ? And may not Ecclesiastical Tyranny be brought in, and supported by the same Means ? Has not this very Term *Church*, had a different Meaning put on it, from what it has in the Original ? And is not the *Greek* Word sometimes

times translated *Assembly*, sometimes *Church*; the better to confound the *Rights of the Church*, or *People*, as that Word in Scripture always signifies? In one of our Articles, *the Church* is defin'd to be a *Congregation of the Faithful*, &c. yet is it not every where else taken for the *Clergy*? When 'tis said in the very next Article, "The Church has Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, and Authority in Matters of Faith;" is it meant of the *Congregation of the Faithful*? And is it not a constant Practice with some Men, to talk of the Power and Authority of the Church, when they only mean their own; in Hopes to make That, which otherwise People might start at, go down under its sacred Name?

ARE the People now taught to conceive the same Thing by the Word *Bishop*, as it means in the Original; where *Bishop* and *Presbyter* are synonymous Terms? Is it not to prevent their seeing it, that we translate the *Greek* Word sometimes by *Overseer*, sometimes by *Bishop*? For the first three, or four Centuries, every Congregation had its own Bishop, who was constantly oblig'd to reside, and to officiate in the Parish Church: And as among the *Jews*, the *Ruler of one Synagogue* had nothing to do in any other; so among the primitive Christians (whose Discipline was accommodated to that of the *Jews*,) it wou'd have been thought highly anti-christian, and invading the Rights of his Brethren, for one Bishop to have more than one *Altar*, or *Communion-Table*. But Things continually changing, a Parish-Bishop, maintain'd by the Alms of his Congregation, commenc'd a Bishop, not only of many Parishes, but of a whole Province; nay, of many Provinces, with the Titles, Pomp, and Grandeur of Princes; and at last, to an *Universal Bishop*, *Pope*, or *Vice God*.

THE

Christianity as old as the Creation. VOL. I.

THE only Church that has now any Pretence to primitive Episcopacy, is That of *North Britain*; where since the *Blessed Revolution*, a Parity of Parish-Bishops has been establish'd: If You want fully to understand the Constitution of the primitive Church, in this, and all other Points, You need only read the *Inquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship of the Primitive Church*, &c. written by the greatest Critick, Divine, and Lawyer of this, or, perhaps, any other Age.

WHAT other Reason can be assign'd, why *διάκονος*, *Rom. 16. 1.* is not render'd *Deaconess*, as well as elsewhere *Deacon*; but *Servant of the Church*; except it be to hinder the People from perceiving, that there was in the Days of the Apostles, an *Order of Women*, who had something more to do in the Church than to sweep it; and who, even at the Council of *Nice* (*Can. 19.*) are reckon'd among the Clergy? Did *Heresy*, or *Schism*, (those religious *Scare-Crows*, as the memorable Mr. *Hales* calls them;) signify any such Thing in the Days of the Apostles, as afterwards, to the infinite Prejudice of *Christianity*, they were made to mean? Why do we give the Name of *Priest* to the *Jewish Sacrificer*, as well as to the *Christian Elder* (Things so widely different); but to make People believe the latter have a *Divine Right* to every Thing, which, under the *Theocracy*, belong'd to the former? And as in the New Testament the *Preachers of the Gospel* are never term'd *ἱερεῖς*, or *Priests*; so *Scaliger* remarks that the Word so apply'd, is not to be met with till after *Justin's* Time.

HAS the Word *Clergy* the same Meaning now, as in the New Testament, where 'tis taken in Opposition to those we now call so? And did not Ecclesiastical Tyranny, and the Ingrossing that Name by the Ministers of the Church commence together?

Now

NOR is it difficult to see the Reason, why the Word, *Βαπτίζω* was not translated but naturaliz'd; since the People would then have perceiv'd, that, not *Sprinkling*, but *Dipping*, or *Immersing*, was meant by it; but should any now (so much Custom has prevail'd) say *John the Dipper*, instead of *John the Baptist*, the People would think it profane.

IF Words have been thus artfully manag'd in relation to Things; have not People much more Reason to suspect the same Management in relation to speculative Points, where Words allow a greater Latitude? If Zeal had had the same Meaning in After-Times, as in the Scripture; it had never occasion'd so much Mischief. And what Mischief have not those two misinterpreted Words, *Zeal* and *Church*, by the artful Management of designing Men, occasion'd? Nay, Is not *Religion* made to signify something very different from what it does in Scripture? How few, when they hear that Word, think of the Description given by St. *James*, of *pure, and undefil'd Religion*? What Absurdities have not People brought into Religion, by fixing a Sense on the Word *Mystery* unknown to the Scripture? Nay, have not some People, if the University of *Oxford* is a good Judge, advanc'd false, impious, and heretical Doctrines concerning the Godhead, in declaring the *Three Persons are three distinct, infinite Minds, or Spirits*; tho' now reviv'd by Dr. *W-----*d, with the Applause of those who before condemn'd it? And did not they, who espous'd those Doctrines, represent their Adversaries as absurd *Sabellians*; in either making the three Persons in the divine Being, to be analogous to three Postures in a human Being; (for this was the utmost Dr. *South's* Divinity could reach to): Or with Dr. *Wallis*, *Three Somewhats*; of which they themselves had no Idea?

Oxford Decree made by the Heads of Colléges and Halls in 1693.

T: t

Good

Good God! what Pains Men take to deface the Idea, which the Light of Nature as well as the Scripture gives of God; and which every One conceives, when he hears him mention'd on either a natural, political, or religious Account.

In short, was it not running too far from our present Purpose, it would not be very difficult to shew, that there are very few Terms in Scripture, which have Things of Moment depending on them, but what have lost their Original Meaning, to become Orthodox.

If They, who have the Translating any old Book capable of vastly different Senses, make it speak what is most for their Interest; must not others be very good Men indeed, who will find Fault with a Translation in such Points as make for their common Advantage; or be at the Pains in such Case, to discover any favourable Additions, Substractions or Alterations that might have been made in the Scriptures, or other ancient Writings? especially if it be true what Mr.

Postscript to
the Convoc.
Proceedings,
p. 90.

Whiston complains of, " That it is frequently in the Mouths
" of the Writers for the Church, that some Things are to
" be conceal'd for fear they gratify *Atheists* and *Deists*; and
" says, Certainly, nothing prejudices them more than such
" Procedure and Expressions, while they thereby perceive
" Remains of pious Frauds every where, and suspect it has
" been so from the Beginning. They see they are not to be
" let plainly into the Truth of Facts, but to be manag'd
" with Cunning and worldly Prudence, for fear of being
" disgusted at Christianity.

MUST not the People be at a Loss, when they see how differently the Texts in the most momentous Parts are interpreted? Dr. *S. Clark* has reckon'd up more than 1250 Texts relating to the Doctrine of the *Trinity*; and how few of them are interpreted alike by the contending Parties?

ties? 'Tis chiefly owing to these different Interpretations, that, where Force has not interpos'd, it has from Age to Age been disputed, whether we have but One, or more than One Object of supreme Worship. A Point, which, was Reason allow'd to be a competent Judge, would not meet with the least Difficulty; and had we a Bible translated by *Unitarians*, many Texts would be very differently translated, from what they are at present; and some left out as forg'd. When so judicious a Divine and Critick as the now Bishop of A---- says, "We should have more of Clergyman's Thanks to Philol. the true Text by being less tenacious of the printed One;" must not that give great Uneasiness to those, who have nothing to trust to, but the printed Text? And will this Uneasiness be abated by his affirming, "that it may with great Truth be said of *Chillingworth*, (the greatest Champion Defen. of his Sermon against the Bp. of Bangor. p. 34 the *Protestant* Cause ever had) that he was abler at pulling down than building up; towards which little can be expected from One, who is by his own Arguments push'd so hard in the Defence he would make of *Protestantism*; that he has nothing left, but to cry out, "The Bible, I say, *The Bible is the Religion of Protestants.*" Nay, must not that Uneasiness be very much increas'd by Divines, perpetually endeavouring to mend by their Criticisms several capital Places in the sacred Writers; nay, who pretend daily to make new and momentous Discoveries? How must their Hearers be edify'd, when they tell them 'tis *Thus* or *Thus*, in such an antient *Manuscript*, *Father*, or *Assembly of Fathers*; or cry, 'tis render'd more agreeable to the Mind of the Holy Ghost in the *Septuagint*, *Vulgar Latin*, *Syriack*, *Chaldaick*, *Ethioptick*, *Coptick*, *Gotbick*, or some other Version,

IF no Court of Judicature, tho' in a Thing of small Moment, will admit of a Copy, tho' taken from the Original, without Oath made by a disinterested Person of his having compar'd it; because, the least Mistake, a various Pointing, a Parenthesis, a Letter misplac'd may alter the Sense; how can we absolutely depend in Things of the greatest Moment, on voluminous Writings, which have been so often transcrib'd by Men, who never saw the Original; (as none, even of the most early Writers pretend they did): And Men too, who even in the earliest Times, if we may judge by the Number of forg'd Passages, and even forg'd Books, would scruple no pious Frauds. And tho' there have been innumerable Copies of the New Testament lost, which, no Doubt, had their different Readings, yet as it stands at present, we are told, there are no less than 30000 various Readings.

Proposals for
Printing by
Subscription
a new Edit.
of the New
Testament.

B. THO' there are so many various Readings; yet does not that great Critick, Doctor Bentley, in his Proposal for Printing by Subscription, a New Edition of the New Testament, assure the World, "That out of a Labyrinth of 30000 various Readings, which croud the Pages of our present best Editions, all put upon an equal Credit to the Offence of many good Persons, that his *Clue*, as he calls it, so leads and extricates us, that there will be scarce 200 out of so many Thousands, that can deserve the least Consideration.

A. HAS this Critick lost his *Clue*, and so forc'd to drop the noble Design of ascertaining the Text of the New Testament, and let the 30000 various Readings remain on an equal Foot to the Offence of many good Persons? who will now as much despair of seeing it done, as they do of Mr. Whiston's restoring the true Text of the Old Testament; which,

“ which, *he says*, has been greatly corrupted both in the
 “ *Hebrew and Septuagint* by the *Jews*, to make the *Rea-*
 “ *sonings* of the *Apostles* from the *Old Testament* incon-
 “ clusive and ridiculous.

DR. *Bentley*, certainly, ought to go on with his *Proposals*,
 because the *World* will hardly take the *Doctor's Word*, that
 in a *Book*; where most *Things* are own'd to be of the
 greatest *Moment*, there should be so many various *Readings*
 of no *Moment*; tho' one, or two, may be of That *Conse-*
 quence, as to destroy the *Design* of the whole *Book*. In a
Prescription where there are ever so many wholesome
Drugs, yet if a poisonous One happens to be mix'd, it may
 turn the Whole into rank *Poison*. If the *Doctrine* of the
Trinity is of the greatest *Moment*, was not the *Church*
 highly concern'd to prevent various *Readings* in that impor-
 tant *Point*, as well as some forg'd *Texts*?

HAD the *Scripture* been better guarded in many other
Matters of *Consequence*, there could not have been so
 many *Texts* seemingly clashing with one another; that
 there are such, is deny'd by none; Dr. *Scot* lays it down as
 certain, that “ That *Opinion* is false, or of little *Moment*,
 “ that has but one, or two *Texts* to countenance it; and
 “ That very dubious, which has none but obscure *Texts*
 “ to rely on; but when there are more, and much plainer
 “ *Texts* for it than against it, it must be false.

Christ. Life.
P. 2. Vol. 1.
Ch. 6. p. 384.

AND another judicious *Divine* says, that “ Our *Faith*
 “ is not to be built on single *Texts*, because they may
 “ have been corrupted; tho' we have no *Manuscript* to
 “ point out to us, that the other *Manuscripts* have been
 “ so corrupted in these *Passages*.” But,

G. Burnet's
Answer to
Laws, about
Ch. Authority.
p. 114.

If we can't depend on single *Texts*; and where there
 are several, the plainest are to carry it; the *Difficulty* will
 be

be to know which are the plainest ; since the different Sects of Christians have ever pretended, that the plainest Texts are on their Side ; and wonder'd how their Adversaries cou'd mistake their Meaning.

THE plain Texts from St. *Austin's* Days, at least in the *West*, were all in Favour of *Predestination* ; and upon those plain Texts the Articles of our most excellent Church, and all other *Protestant* Churches are founded : It's true in Q. *Elizabeth's* Reign, there were some few among the inferior Clergy for *Free-will* ; but then those *incorrigible Free-will* Men, as they were call'd, were, by the Direction of the Bishops, sent to Prison ; there to live on hard Labour, till they repented of their Errors : But since the Court in *Charles I's* Reign, help'd to open the Eyes of our Divines, they, no longer blinded by their Articles, clearly see, that all those plain Texts (and what a Number are muster'd up on both Sides) are all for *Free-will* ; against which, now, there are none but are look'd on as *incorrigible*.

Stryke's Ann.
c. 17.

B. THO' those Books, which contain the traditional Religions of other Nations, have, notwithstanding all the Care taken to prevent it, been mix'd with Fables and monstrous Tales ; yet we say, that the Scripture, especially the New Testament, tho' there are ever so many various Readings, must needs be free from all Errors of Consequence ; because that being design'd by God for a plain, and unalterable Rule, for the Actions of Mankind, cannot but be so guarded by Providence, as to hinder any Mistakes of Moment.

A. YOUR Reasoning, I grant, holds good in relation to the Law of Nature, which equally obliges, at all Times and Places, the whole Race of Mankind ; but then That depends not on the Knowledge of any Language dead, or living ;

living ; or on the Skill, or Honesty of Transcribers, or Translators ; but on that, which as it is apparent to the whole World, so it is not in the Power of Mortals to alter ; viz. the unchangeable Relation of Things, and the Duties resulting from thence.

“ THE Transcribers of Books (as that learned and judicious Critick *Daille* observes) “ have been guilty of innumerable Mistakes ; and that St. *Jerom* (the most learned of the Fathers) complains, “ they wrote not what they found, but what they understood ; ” and he gives Instances of Attempts made on the New Testament by the Orthodox themselves ; particularly St. *Epiphanius*, for saying, “ that in the true, and most correct Copies of St. “ *Luke*, it was writ, that *Jesus Christ wept* ; and that this Passage had been alledg’d by St. *Ireneus*, but that the Catholics had blotted out the Word, fearing that the Hereticks might abuse it. The same St. *Jerom* says, the last twelve Verses in the last Chapter of *Mark* were left out in most Greek Bibles ; *Omnibus Græciæ Libris pene hoc capitulum non habentibus.* *Grotius* imputes this Omission to the Transcribers : But *Maldonat* will not allow of *Grotius*’s Reason, because he says, *Luke* and *John* differ more with *Matthæw* than *Mark* does. *Major enim inter illos & Matthæum, quam inter Matthæum & Marcum apparet repugnantia.*

Hilary, speaking of Christ’s bloody Sweat, and the Angel sent to comfort him, says, *Nec sane ignorandum nobis est, in Græcis & Latinis codicibus compluribus, de adveniente Angelo, vel de sudore sanguineo nihil scriptum reperiri.* This St. *Jerom* seems to confirm.

FOR my Part, I think, that at least, till we are extricated by Dr. *Bentley*’s Clue, the best Way not to be mistaken,

Deusu Patr. P. 2. l. 1. c. 3.

Epist. 28. ad Lucum. p. 247.

l. 1. c. 4.

Epist. ad Heb. Quest. 3. Grot. in loc.

Maldonat. in loc.

Hilary l. 10. de Trin.

Lib. 2. adver. Pelag.

ken, it to admit all for divine Scripture, that tends to the Honour of God, and the Good of Man ; and nothing which does not. This Clue, I think, will extricate the Learned as well as unlearned out of many otherwise insuperable Difficulties ; and make the Laws of God, which Way soever reveal'd, entirely to agree ; and destroy that absurd Notion of God's acting arbitrarily, and commanding for Commanding-sake : And does not St. Paul suppose no

2 Tim. 3. 16.
See Grotius in
loc. and the
Letters about
Inspiration.
p. 190, &c.
Eng. Transl.

Scripture to be divinely inspir'd, but *what is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness?* And if this be the Test, ought we to admit any Thing to be writ by Inspiration, tho' it occurs ever so often in Scripture, till we are certain it will bear this Test ? And, indeed, was it otherwise, we shou'd be in a sad Condition, since there's scarce any Opinion, tho' ever so absurd, or ridiculous, but has its Vouchers, who quote Texts on Texts, for its Support. Good Lord ! what a Load have the different Parties laid on it, by their not observing this Rule ? But,

1 Kings 13.

Cou'd we suppose any Difference between *Natural* and *Traditional* Religion ; to prefer the latter, wou'd be acting irrationally ; as that Prophet did, who went contrary to what God had commanded him by an immediate Revelation ; because a known Prophet assur'd him, he had afterwards a different Revelation for him. A Crime so heinous in the Eyes of the Lord, that he destroy'd this Prophet after a most signal Manner ; tho' he had to plead for himself, that the Prophet, who spoke to him in the Name of the Lord, cou'd have no Interest in deceiving him ; and that there was nothing in the Command, but might as well come from the Lord, as what himself had receiv'd. And 'tis worth observing, that the lying Prophet was so far from

from being punish'd, that the Lord continu'd to him the Gift of Prophecy; nay, pronounc'd by his Mouth the Doom of the Prophet, he so *fatally deceiv'd*.

B. WHY is this more worth observing than the Case of *Abimelech*, who, upon both *Abraham's* and *Sarah's* lying to him, took *Sarah*, as the Lord himself owns, *in the Integrity of his Heart*; and tho' he sent her back un-Gen. 20. 6. touch'd, and gave considerable Presents both to Wife and Husband; yet neither *He*, nor *His*, were to be pardon'd, till *Abraham* (the offending Person) being a Prophet, was to pray for him; so *Abraham pray'd unto God, and God*^{lb. ver. 17:} *heal'd Abimelech, and his Wife, and Maid-servants; and they bare Children*: And yet this holy Prophet was soon after guilty of a very barbarous Action, in sending out *Hagar*, whom *Sarah* had giv'n him to Wife, and his Son^{Gen. 16. 3:} *Ishmael, to perish in the Wilderness*; for no other Reason, but because *Sarah* had seen the *Sou* of *Hagar* *mocking*; and^{Gen. 21. 9.} 'tis likely they had both perish'd, had not an *Angel, calling out of Heaven*, directed *Hagar* to a *Well of Water*. And — ^{v. 19.} perhaps, the same *Angel*, who, when she before fled from *Sarah*, who *had dealt hardly with her*; bid her re-^{Gen. 16. 6.} turn, and submit: But in this last domestick Quarrel, God — ^{v. 9.} himself miraculously interposes, and says, *In all that Sarah*^{Gen. 21. 12.} *hath said unto thee, hearken unto her Voice*. But begging Pardon for this Interruption, pray go on.

A. WE, certainly, ought to adhere strictly to the Light of Nature; if, (as a Learned and Reverend Critick observes) “It must be allow'd by the judicious and impar-^{tye of Nat. and Rev. Re-} tial, that many Corruptions are found in our present^{fig. p. 198,} Copies of the holy Bible; and that we have not now^{199.} this blessed Book in that Perfection and Integrity, that it was first written. It is alter'd in many Places, and

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“ in some of the greatest Moment. — I cou’d prove, I think,
 “ by undeniable and unavoidable Instances, what Mr. *Gregory* of *Oxford* says in his Preface, to some critical Notes
 “ on the Scripture, that he publish’d. There’s no Author
 “ whatsoever says this learned Critick, that has suffer’d
 “ so much by the Hand of Time as the Bible has.” If
 this, I say, must be allow’d, ought we not, in Order to
 prevent all Mistakes, in the first Place to get clear Ideas
 of the moral Character of the Divine Being ; and when by
 Reasons much stronger than any drawn from human Tra-
 dition, we have discover’d this Character, ought we not
 to compare what we are told of him, by what we already
 know of him, and so judge of what Men teach us con-
 cerning God; by what God himself teaches us ; for *we*
are all taught of him : And then we shall be as certain,
 as there is a God perfectly wise, and infinitely good, that
 no Doctrines can come from him that have not these
 Characters stamp’d on them. Thus were there more false
 Readings crept into the Scripture than these Divines sup-
 pose, yet we might still know our Duty ; and be certain
 that by doing our best to promote our mutual Happiness,
 we answer the End of our Creation ; and that if we
 deviate from this Rule for the sake of what depends on
 human Tradition, we quit Certainty for that, which is not
 pretended to amount to more than Probability.

AND it is no small Incouragement for us to observe this
 Rule, since we find, that Men, if like Pedants, or School-
 Masters, they read Books, not to examine the Force and
 Cogency of the Arguments they meet with ; but for
 the sake of Words and Phrases, without considering the
 Nature, Reason, and Tendency of Things ; understand
 very little of Things. Have not great Numbers from Age

to Age, tho' Men of good Natural Parts, had their Understandings confounded by thus injudiciously employing them; and instead of clearing Doubts increas'd them, and fill'd the World with useless Criticisms, and trifling Disputes? while they, who made Words give Place to Things, and argu'd from the Relation Things bear to each other, have shewn themselves able *Casuits*; and enrich'd the World with most useful Discourses, for promoting the Honour of God, and the Good of Man. And, therefore, we are often caution'd by the best Authors, not to stick too close to the Letter in reading the Scripture; since they say the Style of Holy Writ is far from being exact; and that the laying too great Strefs on Words, has been the Occasion of most of the Disputes among Christians.

To shew how little we are to depend on Words and Phrases; they say, a Number of Texts might be produc'd to prove *Moses* to be a God: "For he is call'd (a) God, ^{a Exod. 7. 1.}
" and *Lord*; and pray'd to, under that Appellation, ^{lb. 4. 16.}
" to forgive Sin (b); has attributed to him the same ^{b Num. 12.}
" miraculous Work of bringing the Children of Israel out ^{11.}
" of Egypt, as is ascrib'd to God (c); that the *Israelites* ^{Exod. 10. 16.}
" did believe in him, as well as in the Lord (d), ^{17.}
" and were requir'd so to do; that he promis'd Rain in ^{c Exod. 32. 7.}
" due Season to such as kept his Commandments (e); and ^{lb. 33. 1.}
" to *Jashua*, that he wou'd be with him in carrying the ^{d Exod. 14. ult.}
" People into Canaan (f); altho' as a Man, he was to die ^{lb. 19. 9.}
" before; that he did great Works; yea, Miracles in the ^{e Deut. 11.}
" Sight of the *Israelites*, on purpose that they might know ^{13, 14, 15, &c.}
" that he was the Lord their God (g); that *Aaron* is said to ^{f Deut. 31. 23.}
" be his Prophet (h), which is proper to the true God only; ^{7, 6.}
" and in fine, that the *Israelites* were baptiz'd unto, or into ^{g Exod. 7. 1.}
" *Moses* (i). ^{11 Cor. 10.}

THESE Authors tell us, that in the *Ethicks* of *Aristotle*, in the *Offices* of *Tully*, in the *Moral Treatises* of *Grotius*, *Puffendorff*, &c. the Nature and Reason of our Duties, the Connexion between them, and the Dependance they have on one another are plainly seen ; but in the Scripture, Things, *say they*, are not generally so treated, as that Men may precisely know the Nature, and Extent of their Duty. Are they not, *say they*, for the most part, deliver'd in such a general, undetermin'd, nay, sometimes parabolical, and hyperbolical Manner, as did we not consult our Reason, and learn our Duty from thence, the Letter might lead us wrong ; nay, the Apostle himself says, *the Letter killeth*.

B. I can't believe Things of any Moment are thus represented ; because, as God cou'd have no other End in giving us a Revelation, than the rightly directing our Minds ; so that End cou'd not have been answer'd, except it was deliver'd in a Way most plain, and easy to be understood in all Times and Places ; for if there are Propositions in Scripture, which naturally tend to mislead us ; or if the Use of Languages is perverted in some Instances, how can we be certain, but it may be in others ?

A. Is not the New Testament full of Parables, nay, is it Mat. 13. 34 not said, that *Without a Parable Jesus spake not to the Multitude* ; and for this remarkable Reason, *That seeing they might see, and not perceive ; and hearing they might hear, and not understand ; lest at any Time they shou'd be converted, and their Sins be forgiven them.* Is not St. *John's* Gospel, for the most part, writ after an obscure, allegorical Manner ; especially in relation to the Person of Christ ? And do not Commentators own, we labour under much the same Difficulties in Interpreting St. *Paul* ? The honourable Mr.

Boyle's Style of Script. p. 64. Boyle says, " That sometimes in St. *Paul's* Writings many " Passa-

“ Passages are so penn’d, as to contain a tacit Kind of a
 “ Dialogue ; and that unskilfully by Readers, and even In-
 “ terpreters, taken for an Argument, which, indeed, is an
 “ Objection. It’s said it was the Way of the *East*,
 “ make use of dark, and involv’d Sentences, figurative
 “ and parabolical Discourses, abrupt, and maim’d Ways of
 “ expressing themselves, with a Neglect of annexing Tran-
 “ sitions.

As for hyperbolical Expressions, it was customary among
 the *Eastern* Nations to express themselves after a most pom-
 pous, and high-strain’d Manner. This Way of speaking
 was a main Part of Learning, taught in the Schools of the
 Prophets among the *Jews* ; and happy was he, who could
 most excel in this elevated, romantick Way ; and both the
 Old and New Testament abound with Expressions of this
 Nature. *Isaiab*, in prophesying the Destruction of *Baby-*
lon, says, *The Stars of Heaven shall not give their Light*, Isa. 13. 10.
the Sun shall be darkned. — *I will shake the Heavens*, Isa. Ver. 13.
and the Earth shall remove out of her Place, in the Wrath
of the Lord of Hosts, and in the Day of his fierce Anger.
 And the Destruction of the City of *Jerusalem* in the New
 Testament is describ’d after such a Manner, as if Nature
 was unhing’d, and the Universe dissolving.

Bp. Fleetwood on *Psalms* 18. says, “ That without remem-
 “ bring *David*’s History, One wou’d imagine Heaven and
 “ Earth were mov’d on his Behalf ; and that the Course
 “ of Nature had been overthrown, and his Life cover’d
 “ by continual Miracles : ” And he there observes, that
 “ the *Jewish* Expressions, and the Expressions of all People
 “ that dwelt *Eastward* are full of Pomp, and Amplifi-
 “ cation of Fancy and Hyperbole. ” And, I think, under
 this Head we may reckon these Texts, that *All the Kings* Chrob. 9.
 of ²³

John 21. 25. *of the Earth sought the Presence of Solomon. That If the Things which Jesus did were written, the World itself could not contain the Books. And are not most of the Expressions of St. John as figurative, as Eating the Flesh, and drinking the Blood of the Son of Man? And what monstrous Practices did those Words, taken literally, produce, even in the primitive Times; and what senseless Disputes since? And,*

MUST we not put under this Head a Number of other
 John 14. 13. *Texts; Whatsoever you shall ask in my Name, that will I*
 Mat. 18. 19. *do. If Two of you shall agree on Earth, touching any Thing*
they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father, which
 Mat. 17. 20. *is in Heaven. If you have Faith as a Grain of Mustard*
Seed, you shall remove Mountains, and nothing shall be im-
 Luke 17. 6 *possible to you. And you may say to this Sycamine Tree,*
Be thou plucked up by the Roots, and be thou planted in
 Mat. 16. 19. *the Sea, and it shall obey you. Whatsoever thou shalt bind on*
 1 Cor. 2. 15. *Earth, shall be bound in Heaven. He that is spiritual, judgeth*
 1 Cor. 3. 22. *all Things; (which the Papists say is the Pope) yet he himself is*
 1 John 2. 20. *judg'd of no Man. Things present, and Things to come, all are*
yours. St. John's little Children are said to have an Unction,
and to know all Things. And what more cou'd be said of the
 2 Pet. 1. 4. *Anointed, or Christ himself? Men are bid to be Partakers*
 Mat. 5. 48. *of the divine Nature; and to be as perfect as their heavenly*
Father is perfect. What Blessings are not Christians prom-
 Rev. 1. 6. *is'd, even in this Life? Is it not said, Christ has made us*
 Ib. 5. 10. *Kings and Priests unto God; — and we shall reign on the*
 Mat. 5. 5. *Earth? And are not the Meek to inherit the Earth? And,*
 Mat. 19. 29. *is not every One that hath forsaken Houses, or Brethren, or*
Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or
Lands, for my Name sake, to receive an hundred Fold,
and to inherit everlasting Life? What One is sent to de-
 clare

clare is to be done, That he is said to do : So *Jeremiah* is said to be *set over the Nations, and over the Kingdoms*, Jer. 1. 10. *to root out, pull down, and destroy.* What is design'd to be done, shall be said to be actually done : As *the Lamb* Rev. 13. 8. *slain from the Foundation of the World. Before Abraham* John 8. 58. *was I was* ; or as we (to make it more mysterious) render it, *I am* : Nay, a Creature not born long before, is said to Col. 1. 15. *be the First-born of every Creature.* Advice is call'd Submission, Subjection, and Obedience ; *Ye younger submit* 1 Pet. 5. 5. *yourselfes to the Elder ; yea, be subject to one another. Obey* Heb. 13. 17. *them that have the Rule over you ; and submit yourselves.* Persuasion is call'd Compulsion, as *Compel them to come* Luke 14. 23. *in.* And what rooting Work have not the *Papists* made from this Text ; *Every Plant my heavenly Father hath* Mat. 15. 13. *not planted shall be rooted up ; and such other misapply'd Places ?* Is not God's *permitting Evil*, call'd *doing it ?* *Shall there be Evil in a City, and the Lord has not done* Amos 3. 6. *it ?* Nay, is not the Lord said to *have created Evil ?* Isaiah 45. 7. *And to have harden'd Mens Hearts ; and then to punish them* for their being harden'd ? *And to tempt Men ?* Are we not to pray against God's *leading us into Temptation ?* Nay, is not God, if the Words are to be taken literally, represented as an arbitrary Being, *bating Children not yet* Rom. 9. 11. *born ; neither having done any Good, or Evil ?* *Jacob have* — Ver. 13. *I loved, but Esau have I hated. — Therefore hath he* — Ver. 18. *Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Hath not the Potter Power over his Clay ? —* — Ver. 21.

ARE not Things in Scripture absolutely condemn'd, which are only so conditionally : As the *Jewish Rites* and *Sacrifices* are, in the Old Testament, represented as *an Iniquity, and an Abomination to the Lord.* Things commanded are positively said not to be commanded ; *As I*
spake

Jer. 7 22. *spake not to your Fathers, nor commanded them in that Day I brought them out of the Land of Egypt, concerning Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices.* What can be more figurative than Jesus's saying, *If any Man come to me, and hate not his Father, and Mother, and Wife, and Children, and Brethren, and Sisters; yea, and his own Life also, he can't be my Disciple.* Things spoken in an unlimited, are to be taken in a restrained Sense: *Swear not at all. Children and Servants, obey your Parents and Masters in all Things. The Love of Money, is the Root of all Evil. Whatsoever the Pharisees bid you do, that do, and observe. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. Prove all Things. And sometimes a short Duration is express'd by the Words for ever; or for everlasting; or for the End of the World: So Jonab, after he came out of the Fish's Belly, says, The Earth with her Bars was about me for ever; and an hundred other such Texts: So that whether any Duration is; to be everlasting, (in the Sense we take that Word-) can't be known from the Words of Scripture; but it must be judg'd of from the Nature of the Things that are said thus to endure. But,*

WHAT can be more surprising, than Christ's declaring in most express Terms, he came to do That, which we must suppose he came to hinder: *Think not, (says he) I am come to send Peace; I come not to send Peace, but a Sword. For I am come to set a Man at Variance with his Father, &c. And, Suppose ye, I am come to give Peace on Earth, I tell you nay; but rather Division.* And again, *I am come to send Fire on Earth, and what will I, if it be already kindled.* And has not that Fire burnt outrageously ever since, being blown up by those, whose Business it was to have extinguish'd it; and have they not so acted as if this was a

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Prophetick Saying, they were at all Times bound to see fulfill'd; tho' to the Destruction of all moral Duties whatever.

ANOTHER Difficulty in understanding both the Old and New Testament, is, that most Things, tho' owing to second Causes, are referr'd immediately to God. In the New Testament, *Pilate* is said to have his Power from John 19. 11. Above, even while he was condemning *Jesus*. And there Rom 13. 1. is no Power but of God; the Powers that be, are ordain'd of God: Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the Acts 20. 28. Flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers. Nay, every good Motion is imputed to the Spirit, whether with, or without Understanding. I will pray with 1 Cor. 14. 15. the Spirit, and with the Understanding also: I will sing with the Spirit, and with the Understanding also. Or, if a Man talk'd in an unknown Tongue, and cou'd not interpret what he said; or any of the Congregation understood him; yet it was *Propheying*, and the Gift of the Spirit. And St. Paul calls a Heathen Poet a Prophet. And is not Spirit, nay, the Spirit of God, taken, at least, in twenty different Senses in the Scripture. See Tractat. Theol Polit. p. 14. &c.

In short, the Words of Scripture, on which Things of the greatest Consequence depend, are, as is shewn by a learned Author, sometimes taken, not only in a different, but contrary Sense. However, to give one Instance, *Nature* Stapleton of Controv. l. 4. c. 10. in Rom. 2. 14. and *Nature* in Eph. 2. 3. if rightly translated, are taken in opposite Senses; and that Word in 1 Cor. 11. 14. is taken in a Sense different from both.

How can we know from Scripture, what Things are owing immediately to God, or to second Causes; since every Thing that was thought to be good, not only the Powers and Faculties of Mens Minds, but voluntary Ac-

tions themselves, are immediately ascrib'd to God. For
 Exod. 31. 3, 4 Instance, *Bezaleel* is said to be *fill'd with the Spirit of God in Wisdom, and Understanding*; because he cou'd *devise cunning Works of Gold, and Silver, &c.* And the Prophet *Isaiab*, after he had describ'd the whole Art of
 Maiah 28. 26 Plowing and Sowing, says of the Plowman, *His God does instruct him to Discretion, and teach him.* — And speak-
 — Ver. 29. ing of the Art of Threshing, he says, *This also comes from the Lord of Host, which is wonderful in Counsel, and excellent in Working.* Can the Clergy have a better Pre-
 tence to a *Jure-divino-ship*, than the Plowman and Thresher? Where is it said of them, that *their God instructs them to Discretion, and teaches them*? Or, that *their Art comes from the Lord of Host, which is wonderful in Counsel, and excellent in Working*?

As some Things are immediately referr'd to God, so
 2 Sam. 24. others are as immediately referr'd to Satan; nay, the
 1 Chron. 21. same Action is imputed both to God and Satan. These few, among numberless Instances, I mention, to shew; that the Scripture supposes, that from our Reason we have such infallible Tests, to judge what is the Will of God, that we are safe from being misled by any Expressions of this Nature.

B. SURELY, the moral Precepts deliver'd by our Saviour, are not express'd thus obscurely.

A. THESE, no doubt, are the plainest; yet even These, generally speaking, are not to be taken in their obvious and
 Luke 6. 35. literal Meaning: As for Instance, *Lend, hoping for nothing again. He that takes away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak*
 Mat. 5. 40. *also. Of him, who takes thy Goods, ask them not again.* And
 Luke 6. 30. shou'd we not, without having Recourse to the Reason of Things, be apt to think, that the Poor, as such, were the
 only

only Favourites of Heaven: *Blessed be ye Poor ; for Yours* Luke 6. 20;
is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are Ye that hunger, for 21.
Ye shall be filled. And shou'd we not likewise be apt to
 imagine, that the Gospel was an Enemy to the Rich as
 such ; and consequently, to all those Methods which make
 a Nation rich : As, *Woe unto you rich ; for you have receiv'd* — 24.
your Consolation. It is easier for a Camel to pass through the — 18. 25.
Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the King-
dom of God. And that no Man might be rich, it was a ge-
 neral Precept, *Sell what ye have, and give Alms :* Nay, — 12. 33.
the Woman that cast into the Treasury her two Mites is
 commended ; because she cast in *all she had, even all* Mark 12. 44.
her Living. And to shew that none were exempt from
 this Precept, Jesus says to the Man, who *had observ'd all*
the Precepts from his Youth, One Thing thou lackest, sell Mark 10. 21.
whatsoever thou hast, and give to the Poor. This Precept is
 impracticable in a Christian State, because there cou'd be no
 Buyers where all were to be Sellers ; and so is a Commu-
 nity of Goods, tho' in Use among the *Essenes*, and the Chri-
 stians at first.

'Tis certain, that such Passages, as *Blessed are they* Mat. 5. 4.
that mourn ; Blessed are ye that weep ; Woe unto you that Luke 6. 21.
laugh now, ye shall mourn, and weep. And other Texts a- Ib. v. 25.
 bout *Self-denial, and taking up the Cross ; and Take no* Mat. 6. 25.
Thought for your Life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall
drink. Take no Thought for the Morrow ; Consider the Ra- Ib. Ver. 34.
vens, for they neither sow, nor reap. — Consider the Lillies, Luke 11. 24.
how they grow, they toil not, they spin not ; and yet, I say, Ib. Ver. 27.
Solomon, in all his Glory, was not array'd like one of these.
 'Tis certain, I say, that such like Texts have, by being inter-
 preted literally, run Men into monstrous Absurdities ?

Mat. 5. 39. FROM this Text, *Resist not Evil; but whoever shall smite thee on thy right Cheek, turn to him the other also;* and some others of the like Nature, not only the primitive-Fathers; but a considerable Sect, even now among the *Protestants*; think all Self-defence unlawful.

Mat. 19. 12. FROM these Sayings of our Saviour, *There are some Eunuchs, which were so born from their Mothers Womb; and there are some Eunuchs, which were made Eunuchs of Men; and there be Eunuchs, which have made themselves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's-sake;* the primitive Fathers, who thought they ought not to put a different Meaning on the Word *Eunuch* in the latter End of the Verse, from what it had twice before; believ'd it a Piece of heroick Virtue for Men to castrate themselves: And tho' by the *Roman Law*, no One cou'd be castrated without Leave of the President, as

Appl. Sect. 37. *Justin* observes; yet he commends a Youth, who perform'd this Operation on himself without it. And You know, that the Bishop of *Alexandria* highly approv'd this Action in *Origen*, as an Instance of heroick Virtue; tho' afterwards, when he became his Capital Enemy, he as much condemn'd it. Do not these Things sufficiently shew, that we must not deviate one Tittle from what our Reason dictates in any of these important Points. Nay, even the Pre-

Mat. 18. 22. cept of *forgiving Injuries, not only seven, but seventy Times seven*, except interpreted consistently with what the Light of Nature dictates to be our Duty, in preserving our Reputation, Liberty, and Property; and in doing all we can in our several Stations, to hinder all Injury and Injustice from others, as well as ourselves; wou'd be a Doctrine attended with fatal Consequences: So that the Expediency, or even Lawfulness of forgiving Injuries, depends on such Circumstances as human Discretion is to judge of.

As

As I am a Member of the Common-wealth, I can't be a Judge in my own Cause; and tho' I may legally prosecute a Man who has injur'd me; yet if the Injury be but slight, and by my over-looking it, he may become my Friend; common Prudence will oblige me to forgive him: But, if he, taking Advantage of my good Nature, injures me the more, and more frequently, because he may do it with Impunity; the Precept of *forgiving*, tho' it forbids me to punish for Punishment-sake; does no more in this Case bar me of a legal Remedy, than it does Nations of resenting National Injuries: And all good Governments oblige People, for the sake of the Common Good, to prosecute those who have injur'd them by robbing, stealing, or any other Ways cheating, or defrauding them. So that 'tis the Reason of Things, which, in all Circumstances, must determine us how to act; and consequently, when this Precept is truly stated, there is nothing new in it: But if it be not truly stated, it is such a new Doctrine, as may be attended with fatal Consequences.

Celsus, says, that "the Doctrine of *forgiving Injuries*, Origen contra Celsum, l. 7. p. 373. "was not peculiar to the Christians, tho' they taught it after a grosser Manner." And *Confucius* thus expresses this Doctrine, "Acknowledge thy Benefits by the Return of Max. 23. in the translated Morals of Confucius. Benefits; but never revenge Injuries.

B. Confucius, tho' he forbids the revenging Injuries, yet he did not carry Things to that State of Perfection, as to teach the *loving our Enemies*; but on the contrary maintains, Max. 63. "We may have an Aversion for an Enemy without desiring Revenge; the Motions of Nature are not always criminal; and 'tis only the good Man, who can love, and hate Max. 15. "with Reason.

A. ARE not the Passions of Love and Hatred given us by God, to be exercis'd on proper Objects? Actions, abstractedly consider'd, are not the Objects of Love and Hate, but Persons for the sake of their Actions; and are not the Actions of some Men too detestable to create in us any Sentiments, but of Aversion; so as to oblige us to bring them to condign Punishment? Nay, must we not learn to hate ourselves, before we can learn to love those that hate us?

If we ought not, nay, cannot love the Devil, because our Enemy; how can we love those Devils incarnate, those Enemies of God and Men, who hate, and persecute Men for shewing their Love to God, in following the Dictates of Conscience? If Love carries with it Complaisance, Esteem, and Friendship, and these are due to all Men; what Distinction can we then make between the best, and worst of Men? Tho' God, it's true, makes the *Sun to shine*, and the *Rain to fall on the evil, and the good*; and, indeed, how cou'd it be otherwise in the present State of Things? yet, certainly, he does not love evil Men, tho' he bears with them for a Time.

I am so far from thinking the Maxims of *Confucius*, and Jesus Christ to differ; that I think the plain and simple Maxims of the former, will help to illustrate the more obscure Ones of the latter, accommodated to the then Way of speaking. Our Saviour's saying, *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy*; Divines have, in vain, puzzl'd themselves to find out that Text in the Old Law; for cou'd they find it as they do other Texts, that our Saviour in the same Chapter, by this Way of speaking, refers to; it wou'd only shew, that the Divine Precepts were not consistent with one another. Indeed, St. Paul says, *If thy Enemy hunger, feed him*;

Mat. 5. 43.

Rom. 12. 20.

him ; if he thirst, give him Drink ; for in so doing thou shalt heap Coals of Fire on his Head : But treating him Psalm 118 8, thus, can't sure be an Argument of Love ; since 'tis in 13. 120. 4. Order to have Divine Vengeance fall on his Head. 140. 10.

B. COMMENTATORS agree, that these Precepts of our Saviour are not to be taken in the plain, obvious, and grammatical Meaning of the Words ; but are to be so explain'd, limited, and restrain'd, as best serve to promote human Happiness.

A. SUPPOSE those Precepts are capable of being thus paraphras'd, yet how do we know this was the Design of the Preacher ? The *Essenes* (a Sect our Saviour never found fault with) had, as is plain from *Philo* and *Josephus*, Rules much the same ; which they interpreted according to the plain and literal Meaning ; and the Christians, as I shall shew hereafter, for some Centuries, understood most of these Precepts after the same Manner ; believing that the Nature of moral Rules requir'd they should be thus interpreted ; especially such as are design'd to govern the Actions of the most ignorant and illiterate ; and taught too by a Person, whose infinite Knowledge must enable him so to express himself, as that his Words should not be liable to the least Misconstruction.

B. HOWEVER, Christians at first depending on the grammatical, and obvious Meaning of the Words, might mistake ; yet Reason taught them afterwards how they were to be interpreted.

A. REASON, then, must be our Guide ; and we must know our Duty from the Light of Nature, antecedently to those Precepts ; otherwise we cou'd never know it was our Duty to put such Senses on Words, as they otherwise seem not to bear. Besides,

SHOU'D

SHOU'D not Rules concerning Morality, be suited to Mens particular Circumstances, plainly describing that Conduct which they require? Is not this the Design of the Municipal Laws in every Country? What Benefit cou'd Subjects have, from Laws written in such a loose, general, and undetermin'd Manner; as *Lend, hoping for Nothing again; If any Man will sue thee at Law, and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak also: Of him who takes away thy Goods, ask them not again;* or those other Texts, which seem to condemn the Rich as such, and require, not the setting the Poor at Work, but the *selling All, and giving to the Poor*; or those other Precepts, which seem to forbid *Self-defence*; or require us to *take no Thought for our Life*; or for *the Morrow*? And that too by Arguments drawn from *Lillies, neither toiling, nor spinning*? The same may be said of all general, and undetermin'd Rules in the New Testament, tho' more plainly deliver'd: As for Instance, tho' tis said, *Servants, obey your Masters in all Things*; and *please them well in all Things*; yet is the Measure of Obedience due from Servants to Masters any otherwise to be learnt, than from the Agreement of the Parties, or the Custom of the Country? 'Tis said, *We are to render to Cæsar, the Things that are Cæsar's*; but must we not learn from the Laws in every Nation, who is *Cæsar*? And what is his Due? Otherwise we shou'd act like those wicked Priests, who, not long since, from general Words of *Obedience*, wou'd have destroy'd our happy Constitution; and treacherously invested the Prince with an absolute Power. We are to *render all Men their Dues*; but what those Dues are, we are to learn from the Reason of Things, and the Laws of the Country.

Col. 3. 22,

Titus 2. 9:

IN

IN a Word, 'tis the Tendency of Actions, which makes them either good or bad ; they that tend to promote human Happiness are always good ; and those that have a contrary Tendency are always bad. And 'tis the Circumstances Men are under, by which we are to judge of the Tendency of Actions. As for Instance, the killing a Man, consider'd without its Circumstances, is an Action, neither good or bad ; but by the Magistrate, when the publick Good requires it ; or by a private Man, when necessary for Self-defence ; is an Action always good : But done when the publick Good does not require it, when there is no such Danger, and with Malice prepenſe ; 'tis always evil. Taking up Arms against a Person entrusted with the Protection of the Common-Wealth, can't be determin'd to be good, or bad, without considering Circumstances ; if he has not abus'd his Trust, it will be Rebellion, the highest of Crimes ; but if he has betray'd that Trust, and oppress'd the Community, then a just and necessary Defence. Injoying a Woman, or lusting after her, can't be said, without considering the Circumstances, to be either good, or evil ; that warm Desire, which is implanted in human Nature, can't be criminal, when persw'd after such a Manner, as tends most to promote the Happiness of the Parties ; and to propagate and preserve the Species. What we call *Incest*, is now for many good Reasons not to be allow'd of ; yet it was a Duty in the Children of *Adam* and *Eve* : And if the nearest of Kin were now thrown on a desert Island, I see no Reason, but that they might act as the first-born Pair did.

Tho' there were ever so many Texts in the New as well as Old Testament against Usury, and those too back'd by the unanimous Authority of all the Fathers ; yet the forbidding it, especially in Trading Nations, wou'd now be im-

moral; since without it Industry wou'd in a great Measure be discourag'd, Arts unimprov'd, and Trade and Commerce, consisting chiefly in Credit, destroy'd: Besides, what Reason can be assign'd, why a Man shou'd any more lend his Money, than lett his Lands for Nothing. And even that common Rule of doing-as we would be done unto, supposes an Action fit to be done; or at least, without any ill Tendency. Nay, to go a little further; was not the Command of *abstaining from Blood*, given after the Deluge to the then whole Race of Mankind; and often repeated in the Law? And in the New Testament, is not this same Precept enjoin'd the *Gentile* Converts, by the unanimous Decree of the Apostles, and by the Holy Ghost too, as necessary; nay, equally so with the abstaining from Fornication; and thought by all Christians, for many Ages, to be of perpetual Obligation? yet who is now so ridiculous, as out of Religion to abstain from Black-Puddings? Who now, to give another Instance, thinks it a Duty to wash his Neighbour's Feet? tho' a Thing, not only commanded by a dying Saviour, after the most solemn Manner, and under no less Penalty than *having no Part in him*; but enforc'd, and inculcated by his own Example. Our Saviour commands Men *not to swear at all*; and St. James impreefs the same Precepts, by saying, *Above all Things, swear not*; and by the Manner of its being introduc'd by our Saviour, it seems chiefly to relate to Oaths taken on solemn Occasions; *It is said of Old, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shall perform unto the Lord thine Oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all.* — And yet, who now, besides *Quakers*, refuse to swear at all? By these, you see, tho' several other Instances might be produc'd, how Christians have, in the main, taken the Tendency of Actions to be the Rule, to judge of their Lawfulness or Unlawfulness, Goodness

or

Mat. 5. 34.

James 5. 12.

Mat. 5. 33.
34.

or Badness: And in those few Things Superstition has made them judge otherwise, has it not always been to their Prejudice?

B. Is there no Exception to this Rule? Must Men, at all Times, make their Words and Thoughts agree; and never speak, but just as they think?

A. THE Rule I have laid down holds even here; for tho' Speech was given Men to communicate their Thoughts, and 'tis generally for their common Good, that Men shou'd speak as they think; yet this common Good prescribes certain Restrictions: Deceiving an Enemy in a just War, either by Words or Actions, if it tends to bring about the End of War, Peace, is certainly a Duty; and the same Reason obliges People not to keep those Promises, tho' sworn to, which they have been forc'd to make to Robbers and Thieves: And some go so far, as to think, that those who wou'd force others to declare their Opinions to their own Prejudice, in such Matters where the Government has no Concern; have no more Right to Truth than Robbers, and other publick Enemies.

FRIENDSHIP will sometimes oblige Men to deceive People, when it manifestly tends to their Good, and none are prejudic'd by it; and all practise it with Relation to Children, sick People, and Men in Passion: Must he not be an ill Man, indeed, who would not save an innocent Person, by telling his Pursuer a Falshood? This is a Duty he owes to both, the Persuer and persu'd. And if Men, (as none scruple it) may bid their Servants say, *They are not at Home*; and do several other Things of this Nature; why may they not, when Silence will be interpreted to their Prejudice, deceive impertinent People, in such Matters where they have no Concern? Thus, you see, there are certain Ex-

ceptions to this Rule, which, as well as the Rule itself, are built on the Good of Mankind; and yet these Exceptions will by no Means justify mental Reservations, or Equivocations.

THE Children of *Israel*, in the Time of the *Judges*, were certainly none of the best *Casuits*; who, when in a Quarrel, Judges 21:1 (the oddest that ever was) having sworn before the Lord at Mispath, not to give any of their Daughters to Wife to Benjamin; and, in Pursuance of this Quarrel, destroy'd them with their Wives and Children, except 600, who escap'd by flying to a Cave; and then reflecting that a whole Tribe would be lost, if they did not give them Wives; and their Oaths, accompany'd with a Curse, violated, if they did; found out these two Expedients: The Men of *Jabesh Gilead*, not concerning themselves
 Isa. Ver. 8, in this Quarrel, nor coming to the general Assembly, they
 II. Ver. 12. destroy'd with their Wives and Children, except 400 Virgins; whom they gave for Wives to these Benjamites; but these not being a sufficient Number, they advis'd, nay, com-
 Ib. Ver. 20, manded them, to seize on some of their Daughters as they
 21. were dancing, and to carry them off: Thus these merciful, and religious People preserv'd their Oaths, and their Brother Benjamin.

B. THE Hebrew Midwives, no doubt, acted according to your Rule in deceiving *Pharoah*, by not destroying the Hebrew Male Children; because they said, *They feared God, and*
 Exod. 1. 17. *God dealt well with them, and made them Houses*; but there's another Precedent in the same History, which seems very
 Exod. 3. 8. surprising: The Lord, tho' he told *Moses*, and the Elders of *Israel*, his real Design of bringing his People out of Egypt in-
 — Ver. 18. to the Land of the *Canaanites*, yet bids them say to the King of Egypt, *Let us go three Days Journey into the Wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God; lest he fall upon*

us with Pestilence, or with the Sword: We can't sacrifice in the ^{Exod. 8. 26.}
Land, for we shall sacrifice the Abomination of the Egyptians ;
Our Cattle must go with us, for thereof we must serve the — 10. 26.
Lord. And at last, when *Pharrah*, whose Heart God had
frequently harden'd, comply'd with their Request, he bids
them go *serve the Lord, as ye have said* ; and upon this Oc- — 12. 31;
casion, they borrow'd of the *Egyptians*, as the Lord order'd
them, *Jewels of Gold and Silver, and Raiment*, even to the ^{36.} — 12. 35.
spoiling of them ; and when *Pharaoh* (who all along seem'd
jealous of their Design, and bids them *not go far away* ;) — 2. 28;
found that this solemn Sacrifice was a meer Pretence, and
that they really fled with all they had borrow'd of his People,
he persu'd the Fugitives ; the Consequence was, that the
Egyptians, instead of obtaining Restitution, were miracu-
lously destroy'd, and *Pharaoh* lost his Life as well as his
Subjects ; and those who had dealt thus treacherously with
them, were as miraculously preserv'd.

A. As to this Point, I can only advise You to consult
our learned Commentators, who will satisfy You in this
Matter, as well as why the *Terror of the Lord* hinder'd Ju- ^{Gen. 35. 5;}
stice to be done upon the two Sons of *Jacob*, for the vilest
Piece of Cruelty and Treachery, they committed on the
Shechemites. But not to meddle with Things foreign to our
Purpose,

I will venture to say, that this Rule of acting according
as the Circumstances we are under, point out to us, to be
for the general Good, is a Rule without Exception ; where-
as all other general Rules are of little Use, when apply'd
to particular Cases ; because of the many Exceptions to
them, founded on other Rules, equally general : And fur-
ther, that this universal, and unexceptionable Rule is highly
necessary, in explaining all the Precepts of our Saviour ;
espe-

especially those relating to *loving of Enemies*, and *forgiving Injuries*. And the rather, because

THE Ecclesiasticks, tho' they cry up the Precepts of Mens *loving their Own Enemies*; yet they effectually evade this, and all other moral Precepts, by telling them 'tis their Duty to *bate God's Enemies*; and those to be sure, are God's Enemies, who refuse blindly to submit to their Dictates; especially in Matters relating to their Power and Profit: And have too found out many Ways of making the Precept of forgiving Injuries useless; more particularly by telling Men, that 'tis for the Correction of Manners, for the Good of their own, as well as their Neighbours Souls, that the *Spiritual Courts* are erected; where People, for such hasty and angry Words, as no Action (there being no real Damage) will lye for at *Common Law*, are to be censur'd: And thus Numbers of ordinary People are, on this Pretence, to the great Benefit of those Courts, frequently undone; and spiteful Persons gratify their Malice, without any Satisfaction, but that of ruining their Neighbours, and very often themselves.

I might shew You, in Support of my never-faling Rule of judging of Actions by their Tendency, that we are carefully to distinguish between the Actions of Jesus himself; since in some (these being no otherwise to be accounted for) he, as Divines themselves own, acted by Virtue of his Prophetical Office; these, consequently, can be no Precedent for us; but of this hereafter.

B. You have already, I must own, taken a great deal of Pains, to shew, that God, in creating Mankind, had no other Design than their Happiness; and that all the Rules he gave them (it being repugnant to his Nature to have any arbitrary Commands) cou'd have no other Tendency; and that by making them moral Agents, he made them
capable

capable of knowing wherein their Happiness consists ; or in other Words, of discovering whatever the Relations they stand in to God, and their Fellow-Creatures make fit to be observ'd. And from thence You conclude, Mens Happiness, at one Time as well as another, consisting in the same Things ; that the Gospel (which can make no Alteration in the Relations Men stand in to God, and one another ; or the Duties that flow from thence ;) cou'd only be a Republication, or Restoration of that Religion, which is founded on the eternal Reason of Things ; which, You suppose, is what we are still govern'd by ; since we are oblig'd to recede from *the Letter*, tho' the Words are ever so plain, if that recedes from the Reason of Things ; as all own the *Letter* does, in innumerable Places relating to God himself ; by imputing human Parts, human Infirmities, and human Passions, even of the worst Kind, to him ; and making those the Cause of many of his Actions : And that as in the Old Testament there are several Things, either commanded, or approv'd, which wou'd be criminal in us to observe, because we can't reconcile our doing them with the Reason of Things ; so in the New Testament, its Precepts are for the most Part deliver'd either so hyperbolically, that they wou'd lead Men astray, were they govern'd by the usual Meaning of Words ; or else express'd in so loose, general, and undetermin'd a Manner, that Men are as much left to be govern'd by the Reason of Things, as if there were no such Precepts : And the Scripture not distinguishing between those Precepts which are occasional, and which are not, we have no Ways to distinguish them, but from the Nature of Things ; which will point out to us those Rules, which eternally oblige, whether deliver'd in Scripture, or not. These Sentiments You so
strong-

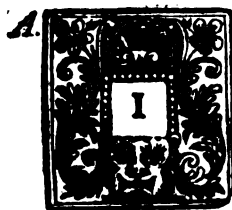
strongly inforce, that I shou'd find it difficult not to yield, had I not so able a Combatant as Dr. S. Clark, for my Second; who, in his Excellent *Discourse of the unalterable Obligation of Natural Religion, and the Truth, and Certainty of the Christian Revelation*; not only shews, that they are distinct Religions; but the infinite Advantage the latter has above the former: And tho' this good, as well as great Man is dead, whereby the Church has sustain'd an irreparable Loss, yet he will for ever live in this Immortal Work.





C H A P. XIV.

Dr. CLARK's Discourse of The Unchangeable Obligation of Natural Religion, and the Truth, and Certainty of the Christian Revelation, consider'd; and from thence is shewn, how inconsistent soever with the Design of that Discourse, that nothing can be a Part of Religion, but what is founded on the Nature, and Reason of Things.



I OWN, the Dr. got immortal Honour by that Discourse; how 'tis admir'd, the seventh Edition shews: And we may well imagine, an Author, who usually exhausts the Subject he writes on, has here omitted nothing that makes for his Purpose. And, therefore, since 'tis your Pleasure, I will fully consider this Discourse, and begin with the Character he gives the *Law of Nature*; and see whether he does not represent it so absolutely perfect, as to take in every Thing that God requires of Mankind: And then examine what he says in Behalf of Revelation, in Contradistinction to the Religion of Nature.

- Edit, 4. p. 82. THE Dr. not only maintains, that " the Law of Na-
 " ture is eternal, universal, and absolutely unchangeable; "
 pag. 47. but has two Sections to prove, " That the *Will of God*
 " always determines itself to act according to the eter-
 pag. 48. " nal *Reason of Things*; and that all *rational Creatures*
 " are oblig'd to govern themselves in all their Actions by
 " the same eternal *Rule of Reason*; " which supposes, that
 all rational Creatures are not only capable of knowing this
 eternal Rule of Reason, but likewise of knowing there can
 be no other Rule, for the Actions both of God and Man.
 In his previous Discourse of the *Being of a God*, he affirms,
 pag. 131. that " They, who are not govern'd by this Law, are for
 " setting up their own unreasonable Self-will, in Opposi-
 " tion to the Nature, and Reason of Things. — acting
 " contrary to their own Reason and Knowledge; attempt-
 " ing to destroy that Order, by which the Universe sub-
 " sists; and by Consequence, offering the highest Affront
 " imaginable to the Creator of all Things, who himself
 " governs all his Actions by these Rules, and cannot but
 " require the same of all his reasonable Creatures." And
 pag. 49. in this Discourse he says, " The All-powerful Creator, and
 " Governour of the Universe, who has the absolute, and
 " uncontrollable Dominion of all Things in his own
 " Hands, and is accountable to none for what he does,
 " yet thinks it no Diminution of his Power, to make this
 " *Reason of Things* the unalterable Rule, and Law of all
 " his own Actions in the Government of the World, and
 " does nothing by mere Will and Arbitrariness." And
 indeed, if God does nothing by mere Will and Arbi-
 trariness, 'tis impossible there can be any other Rule but
 pag. 113. the Reason of Things. And accordingly he says, " The eter-
 " nal and unchangeable Nature, and Reason of the Things
 " them-

“ themselves are the Law of God ; not only to his Crea-
 “ tures, but also to himself, as being the Rule of his own
 “ Actions in the Government of the World. ” “ And, as a pag. 87. 88.
 learned Prelate of our own has excellently shewn, “ not
 “ barely his infinite Power, but the Rules of this eternal
 “ Law, are the true Foundation, and the Measure of his
 “ Dominion over his Creatures. Now, for the same Rea-
 “ son, that *God*, who hath no *Superior* to determine him,
 “ yet constantly directs all his own Actions by the eternal
 “ Rule of Justice and Goodness ; ’tis evident all *intelligent*
 “ *Creatures* in their several Spheres and Proportions, *ought*
 “ to obey the same Rule according to the Law of their Na-
 “ ture. ” Which is supposing it wou’d be Tyranny in God
 to have any arbitrary Commands, or give Man any other
 Rules, but the Rules of this eternal Law, the *true Founda-*
tion, and Measure of his Dominion over his Creatures. And
 again, “ God, who is infinitely self-sufficient to his own pag. 121.
 “ Happiness, cou’d have no Motive to create Things at
 “ all, but only that he might communicate to them his
 “ Goodness and Happiness. ” If so, They, who do all the
 Good they can to themselves, and Fellow-Creatures, an-
 swer the End of their Creation. “ And, *he says*, that in pag. 86. 87.
 “ Matters of Natural Reason and Morality, that which is
 “ holy and good is not therefore holy and good, because it
 “ is commanded to be done ; but it is therefore com-
 “ manded by God, because it is holy and good : ” Which
 supposes that all God’s Commands, if they are all holy and
 good (between which, I think, the Distinction is only ver-
 bal ;) are founded on the Nature, and Reason of Things.
 And accordingly he says, “ that God has made (his intelli- pag. 48.
 “ gent Creatures) so far like himself, as to endue them
 “ them with those excellent Faculties of Reason and Will,

“whereby they are enabl’d to distinguish Good from Evil, and to choose the one, and refuse the other.” Which supposes those are the only Things which God commands, or forbids; otherwise these excellent Faculties wou’d only enable them to know but Part of the Will of God; tho’ God can will nothing but what is for their Good, that being the sole End of his creating them.

AND he supposes, That “this Law of Nature is not founded in the positive Will of God, but arises from the different Relations and Respects which Things have to one another, which makes some Things fit, and others unfit to be done.” And says, that “the Law of Nature has its full obligatory Power, antecedent to all Considerations of any particular *private*, and *personal* Reward or Punishment, annex’d either by natural Consequence, or by positive Appointment, to the Observance, or Neglect of it. This also is very evident: Because if Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, Fitness and Unfitness of being practised, be (as has been shown) originally, eternally, and necessarily, in the Nature of the Things themselves; ’tis plain, that the View of particular Rewards or Punishments, which is only an After-Consideration, and does not at all alter the Nature of Things, cannot be the original Cause of the Obligation of the Law, but is only an additional Weight to enforce the Practice of what Men were before oblig’d to by right Reason.” And to prove this he says, that “the Judgment and Conscience of a Man’s own Mind, concerning the Reasonableness, and Fitness of the Thing, that his Actions should be conform’d to such, or such a Rule, or Law; is the truest, or formallest Obligation, even more properly, and strictly, so, than any Opinion whatsoever of the Authority of the

“con-

“ Giver of a Law, or any Regard he may have to its Sanc-
 “ tions by Rewards and Punishments. For whoever acts con-
 “ trary to this Sense, and Conscience of his own Mind, is
 “ necessarily self-condemned ; and the greatest, and strong-
 “ est of all the Obligations is That, which a Man cannot
 “ break through without condemning himself. ” And,

He likewise affirms, that “ these eternal moral Obliga-
 “ tions, as they are really in perpetual Force, merely from
 “ their own Nature, and the abstract Reason of Things ;
 “ so also they are moreover the express and unalterable
 “ Will, and Command of God to his Creatures, which he
 “ cannot but expect should, in Obedience to his supreme
 “ Authority, as well as in Compliance with the natural
 “ Reason of Things, be regularly, and constantly observ’d
 “ thro’ the whole Creation. ” Which not only supposes,
 that the Reason of Things, and the divine Commands are
 inseparable ; but that ’tis the Reason, or the Fitness of the
 Thing, that makes it a divine Law ; and consequently, that
 they who never heard of any external Revelation ; yet if
 they knew from the Nature of Things what’s fit for them
 to do, they know all that God will, or can require of them ;
 since his Commands are to be measur’d by the antecedent
 Fitness of Things ; and Things can only be said to be fit,
 or unfit, but as they are for, or against the common Good.
 And if the Creator will do every Thing, the Relation he
 stands in to his Creatures makes it fit for him to do ; and ex-
 pects nothing from them, but what the Relation they stand
 in to him, and one another, makes likewise fit for them to
 do ; how can they be ignorant of their Duty ? Especially, if,
 as the Dr. demonstrates, “ All the same Reasons and Argu-
 “ ments, which discover to Men the natural Fitnesses, or Un-
 “ fitnesses of Things, and the necessary Perfections, or Attritu-
 “ tutes

- “butes of God ; prove equally at the same Time, that That,
 “which is truly the Law of Nature, or the Reason of
 “Things, is in like Manner the Will of God.” And,
 pag. 119. He justly observes, that tho’ “This Method of deducing
 “the Will of God from his Attributes ; is of all other the
 “best and clearest, the certainest and most universal, that
 “the Light of Nature affords ; yet there are other collateral
 “Considerations, which prove, and confirm the same.”
 And that
- pag. 121. “THE same may be prov’d from the Tendency, and
 “Practice of Morality, to the Good and Happiness of the
 “whole World :” Which, indeed, wou’d be no Proof, were
 any Thing commanded that had no such Tendency ; for such
 Things, according to the Penalties they were to be enforc’d
 by, wou’d be more, or less to the Hurt of Mankind.
- pag. 34. To shew the natural Connexion there is between all the
 Parts of Religion, he says, “Who believes the Being, and
 “natural Attributes of God, must of Necessity confess his
 “moral Attributes also. Next, he who owns, and has just
 “Notions of the moral Attributes of God, cannot avoid
 “acknowledging the Obligations of Morality, and Natural
 “Religion. In like manner, he who owns the Obligations
 “of Morality and Natural Religion, must needs to support
 “those Obligations, and make them effectual in Practice,
 “believe *a future State of Rewards and Punishments*. And
 pag. 8. he affirms, that “the Certainty of a future State of Re-
 “wards and Punishments, is in general deducible, even
 “demonstrably, by a Chain of clear, and undeniable Rea-
 pag. 125. soning ;” nay, he says, “ ’tis a Proposition in a Manner
 “self-evident.” And speaking of some Argument he had
 pag. 154. before mention’d, he says, “These are very good, and
 “strong Arguments for the great Probability of a future
 “State ;

“ State ; but That drawn from the Consideration of the
 “ moral Attributes of God, seems to amount even to a De-
 “ monstration : Nay, to a compleat Demonstration. p. 140, 141.

IN short, the Dr's *Hypothesis* is, That upon God's framing Mankind after the Manner he has done, there are certain Things resulting from thence, which naturally, and necessarily conduce to their Good or Hurt ; and that the Way to know the Will of God, is to know what those Things are, in Order to do the one, and to avoid the other. For which Reason God gave Mankind Understanding, which (without blaspheming the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of God) must be allow'd to be sufficient to answer the End for which it was given. And that a Being, infinitely wise and good, as well as wholly disinterested, can require nothing of Men, but what they, for the sake of their own Interest, tho' there were no positive divine Commands, were oblig'd to do ; and consequently, that whoever acts for his own Good, in Subserviency to That of the Publick, answers the End of his Creation : As this Scheme of Things, to do the Doctor Justice, gives us the highest Idea of the Goodness, Wisdom, and Perfection of the divine Being ; so to compleat his moral Character, the Dr. represents the Laws of God, by which Mankind are to govern all their Actions, most plain and obvious, and even impress'd on human Nature. And therefore says, that

“ ALL rational Creatures are oblig'd to govern themselves, pag. 48;
 “ in all their Actions, by the eternal Reason of Things, is
 “ evident from the Sense, all, even wicked Men, unavoid- Contents p. 56;
 “ ably have of their being under such an Obligation ; and
 “ from the Judgment of Mens Consciences on their own lb. p. 54;
 “ Actions.” And that “ the most profligate of all Man- pag. 57;
 “ kind, however industriously they endeavour to conceal,
 “ and

* and deny their Self-condemnation, yet cannot avoid making a Discovery of it sometimes when they are not aware
 pag. 53. " of it." And that no Man, but " by the Reason of his
 " Mind, cannot but be compell'd to own, and acknowledge,
 " that there is really such an Obligation indispensably incumbent upon him." And " They who *do* Evil, yet *see*, and
 pag. 60. " *approve* what is good, and condemn in *others* what they
 " blindly allow in *themselves*; nay, very frequently condemn
 " even themselves also, not without great Disorder, and Uneasiness of Mind in those very Things wherein they allow themselves." And herein, give me Leave to say, consists the Excellency of the Law of Nature, that tho' a Man is so brutish as not to observe it himself, yet he wou'd have all others religiously observe it; and no Rule can be calculated for the general Good, but what is so fram'd; and if Men wou'd make this a Test of the Will of God, how happy wou'd they be?

pag. 58. THE Dr. more fully to prove his Point, says, That " the
 " Mind of Man naturally, and necessarily assents to the
 " eternal Law of Righteousness, may still better, and more
 " clearly, and more universally appear, from the Judgment
 " that Men pass on each *Others* Actions, than what we can
 " discern concerning their Consciousness of their own." And
 pag. 61. there he shews, That " the unprejudic'd Mind of Man as naturally disapproves Injustice in moral Matters, as in natural
 " Things it cannot but dissent from Falshood, or dislike incongruities." And again,

pag. 54. " THE Case is truly thus, that the eternal Differences of
 " Good and Evil, the unalterable Rule of Right and Equity, do necessarily, and unavoidably determine the Judgment, and force the Assent of all that use any Consideration, is undeniably manifest from the universal Experience

“ rience of Mankind. For no Man *willingly*, and *delibe-* pag. 55.
 “ *rately* transgresses this Rule in any *great*, and *considerable*
 “ Instance ; but he acts contrary to the Judgment, and Rea-
 “ son of his own Mind, and secretly reproaches himself for
 “ so doing : And no Man observes, and obeys it steadily,
 “ especially in Cases of *Difficulty* and *Temptation*, when it
 “ interferes with any present Interest, Pleasure, or Pas-
 “ sion ; but his own Mind commends, and applauds him
 “ for his Resolution, in executing what his Conscience
 “ cou’d not forbear giving his Assent to, as just, and
 “ right. And this is what St. *Paul* means, when he says,
 “ (*Rom. 2. 14, 15.*) that *When the Gentiles, which have*
 “ *not the Law, do by Nature the Things contained in the*
 “ *Law.*” And in another Place he says, “ No Man does pag. 152.
 “ good, brave, and generous Actions, but the Reason of his
 “ own Mind applauds him for his so doing ; and no Man,
 “ at any Time, does Things base, vile, dishonourable, and
 “ wicked ; but at the same Time he condemns himself.”
 And he says, that “ the eternal Rule of Right ought as in- pag. 54.
 “ dispensably to govern Mens Actions, as it cannot but ne-
 “ cessarily determine their Assent.

ONE wou’d be apt to think, that the Dr. believ’d that
 Man without Reflection, cou’d not but know the Law of
 Nature, and be in Love with it ; since he says, “ That in pag. 61
 “ reading Histories of far, and distant Countries, where
 “ ’tis manifest we can have no Concern for the Event of
 “ Things, nor Prejudices concerning the Characters of Per-
 “ sons ; who is there that does not praise, and admire ;
 “ nay, highly esteem, and in his Imagination love, as it
 “ were, the Equity, Truth, Justice, and Fidelity of some
 “ Persons ; and with the greatest Indignation and Hatred,
 “ detest the Barbarity, and Injustice of Others ? Nay, fur-

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“ ther,

“ ther, when the Prejudices of corrupt Minds lye all on
 “ the Side of Injustice, as when we have obtain’d some very
 “ great Profit, or Advantage, thro’ another Man’s Trea-
 “ chery, or Breach of Faith ; yet who is there, that upon
 “ that very Occasion, does not (even to a Proverb) dislike
 “ the *Person*, and the *Action*, how much soever he may
 “ rejoice at the Event.

THESE Reasons shew the infinite Goodness of God; by not only thus deeply impressing that Law on human Nature, by which God expects all Men shou’d govern all their Actions; but in making the very observing this Law, to carry with it, distinct from the Good it produces, the highest Satisfaction, and rational Enjoyment ; and the contrary, that Sorrow, Remorse, and Self-condemnation, which are the unavoidable Consequence of acting against it : And of this the Philosophers of Old, and I believe, all since, who do not adulterate Religion with Things that are not moral, and consequently, carry no Satisfaction with them ; must be sensible : But as it wou’d be endless, to mention all the Dr. says of the irresistible Evidence, as well as the absolute Perfection of the eternal, and immutable Law of Nature ; I shall recite but one Passage more, which he supports by the Authority of Bishop *Cumberland*. “ This, *says he*, is that Law of
 “ Nature, to which the Reason of all Men, every where, as
 “ naturally, and necessarily assents, as all Animals conspire in
 “ the Pulse, and Motion of their Heart and Arteries ; or as
 “ all Men agree in their Judgment concerning the Whiteness
 “ of Snow, or the Brightness of the Sun.

pag. 83.

B. THIS, indeed, is so full and home, that no ancient, or modern Deist cou’d have said more in Praise of the unlimited Wisdom, and universal Goodness of God ; than in supposing the common Parent of Mankind, has given all
 his

his Children, even those of the lowest Capacities, and at all Times, sufficient Means, of discovering whatever makes for their present, and future Happiness ; and that no Man can plead Ignorance of a Law as evident as that the Sun is bright, or Snow white ; and as inseparable from rational Nature, as the Pulse of the Heart and Arteries are from animal Nature.

A. IF this be talking like a Deist, all who write on this Subject talk thus ; since they all maintain, that “ there must be a Law of eternal Rectitude flowing from the Nature of Things, otherwise there could be no Actions good, or lovely in themselves ; no real Distinction between Virtue and Vice ; Good or Evil ; and that God can’t dispense with his Creatures, or with himself, for not observing it ; otherwise an arbitrary Will, which might change every Moment, would govern every Thing ; ” and that “ this Law of eternal Rectitude is implanted in Man at his very Creation ; and that no Man can act contrary to it, but does Violence to himself, and sins against his very Make, and Constitution. ” And can it be otherwise, when the only innate Principle in Man is the Desire of his own Happiness ; and the Goodness of God requires no more than a right cultivating this Principle ; in preferring a general, or publick ; to a particular, or private Good ? And where there are two Evils, and both can’t be avoided, to choose the less *sub ratione boni*.

THE latter Part of the Dr’s Discourse is chiefly levell’d against those he calls the *True Deists* ; and that You may know what Sort of Men they are he combats, he gives You their Creed.

“ THESE Deists, *says he*, did they believe what they pretend, have just, and right Notions of God, and

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“ of

“ of all the divine Attributes in every Respect, who
 “ declare they believe there is one Eternal, Infinite,
 “ Intelligent, All-powerful, and Wise Being; the Crea-
 “ tor, Preserver, and Governor of all Things; *That*
 “ this supreme Cause is a Being of infinite Justice, Good-
 “ ness and Truth, and all other moral as well as natural
 “ Perfections; *That* he made the World for the Manifesta-
 “ tion of his Power and Wisdom, and to communicate his
 “ Goodness and Happiness to his Creatures; *That* he pre-
 “ serves it by his continual all-wise Providence, and go-
 “ verns it according to the eternal Rules of infinite Ju-
 “ stice, Equity, Goodness, Mercy and Truth; *That* all
 “ created, rational Beings, depending continually upon
 “ Him, are bound to adore, worship, and obey Him; To
 “ praise Him for all Things they enjoy, and to pray to
 “ Him for every Thing they want; *That* they are all
 “ obliged to promote in their Proportion, and according
 “ to the Extent of their several Powers and Abilities, the
 “ general Good and Welfare of those Parts of the World
 “ wherein they are plac’d: In like manner, as the divine
 “ Goodness is continually promoting the universal Bene-
 “ fit of the Whole; *That* Men, in particular, are every
 “ Where oblig’d to make it their Business, by an universal
 “ Benevolence to promote the Happiness of all others;
 “ *That* in Order to this, every Man is bound always to be-
 “ have himself so towards others, as in Reason he would
 “ desire they should in the like Circumstances deal with
 “ Him; Wherefore, he is oblig’d to obey, and submit to
 “ his Superiors in all just, and right Things, for the Pre-
 “ servation of Society, and the Peace and Benefit of the
 “ Publick; To be just and honest, equitable and sincere
 “ in all his Dealings with his Equals, for the keeping
 “ in-

“ inviolable the everlasting Rule of Righteousness, and
 “ maintaining an universal Trust and Confidence, Friend-
 “ ship and Affection amongst Men; and towards his Infe-
 “ riors to be gentle and kind, easy and affable, charitable
 “ and willing to assist as many as stand in Need of his
 “ Help, for the Preservation of universal Love and Bene-
 “ volence amongst Mankind; and in Imitation of the Good-
 “ nefs of God, who preserves, and does Good to all his
 “ Creatures, which depend entirely upon him for their
 “ very Being, and all that they enjoy; *That* in respect of
 “ Himself, every Man is bound to preserve, as much as in
 “ him lies, his own Being; and the right Use of all his
 “ Faculties, so long as it shall please God, who appointed
 “ him his Station in this World, to continue him therein;
 “ *That* therefore, he is bound to have an exact Government
 “ of his Passions, and carefully to abstain from all Debau-
 “ cheries and Abuses of himself, which tend either to the
 “ Destruction of his own Being, or to the Disorders of his
 “ Faculties, and disabling him from performing his Duty,
 “ or hurrying him into the Practice of unreasonable, and
 “ unjust Things: Lastly, *That* according as Men regard,
 “ or neglect these Obligations, so they are proportiona-
 “ bly acceptable, or displeasing unto God; who being
 “ supreme Governor of the World, cannot but testify
 “ his Favour, or Displeasure, at some Times, or other;
 “ and consequently, since this is not done in the present
 “ State, therefore there must be a future State of Re-
 “ wards and Punishments in a Life to come.

THE Deists, no doubt, will own, that the Dr. has done
 them Justice; since all their Principles, as he represents
 them, have a direct Tendency to make them good Men;
 and contain nothing to divert them from intirely attend-
 ing

ing to all the Duties of Morality, in which the whole of their Religion consists ; and which leaves them no Room for those endless Quarrels and fatal Divisions, which Zeal for other Things, has occasion'd among their Fellow-Creatures ; and whom they pity upon the Account of that insupportable Bondage, which Superstition has, in most Places, laid them under : And must not a Religion, which the Dr. has prov'd to be demonstrably founded on the eternal Reason of Things, have a more powerful Influence on rational Beings, than if it was laid on any other Bottom. How can a Religion, which, as the Dr. describes it, carries in all its Parts, such evident Marks of Wisdom and Goodness, fail to make Men in Love with their Duty ; when they must plainly see, That, and their Interest to be inseparable ? If Princes requir'd no more of their Subjects, and private Men of their Neighbours, than to be govern'd by these Principles ; how happy wou'd the World be, thus govern'd ?

I do not perceive the Dr. himself finds any Defect in their Principles ; but only objects to their Manner of taking them as they are discoverable by the Light of Nature, and the Reason of Things.

B. Is not That a very just Objection ?

A. NOT from One who supposes, that “ the eternal Reason of Things ought to be the Rule by which all Men should govern all their Actions ; ” and who, among other Things of the like Nature, affirms, that “ the original Obligation of all is the eternal Reason of Things ; That Reason, which God himself, who has no Superior to direct him, or to whose Happiness nothing can be added, or any Thing diminish'd from it, yet constantly obliges himself to govern the World by : And “ the

“ the more excellent, and perfect his Creatures are, the
 “ more chearfully, and steddily are their Wills determin’d
 “ by this *supreme Obligation*, in Conformity to the Na-
 “ ture, and in Imitation of the most perfect Will of
 “ God.

B. WHY do You think This favours *Deism*?

A. BECAUSE, if the eternal Reason of Things is the
supreme Obligation, must not That, if there’s any Diffe-
 rence between It and External Revelation, take Place?
 And must not That Rule, which can annul any other,
 be not only the supreme, but the sole Rule; for as far
 as Men take any other Rule, so far they lose of their
 Perfection, by ceasing to be govern’d by this Rule, in
 Conformity to the Nature, and in Imitation of the per-
 fect Will of God. And if this most perfect Will of
 God is to be thus known, can Things that have another
 Original, and are of a later Date, be any Part of the most
 perfect Will of God? Or, can the eternal Reason of
 Things extend to Things that do not belong to Reason;
 or, as Divines love to speak, are above Reason? Or,
 can the Dr. suppose, there’s any other Rule, than the
 Nature, or Reason of Things, when he makes no Me-
 dium between Mens being govern’d by it, and by their
 own unreasonable Will?

*Demonstration
 of the Being
 and Attrib. of
 God. p. 131.*

IN short, ’tis the View with which an Action is done,
 that makes it moral: He, who pays his Debts out of a
 Principle of Honesty, does a moral Action; while he,
 who does the same for Fear of the Law, can’t be said
 to act morally: And can he, who does a Thing to avoid
 being punish’d, or in Hopes of being rewarded hereaf-
 ter; and for the same Reason is ready to do the con-
 trary; merit, at least, equally with him, who is in Love
 with

with his Duty, and is govern'd, not by servile Motives, but by the original Obligation of the moral Fitness of Things ; in Conformity to the Nature, and in Imitation of the perfect Will of God. This the Dr. will not deny to be true Deism ; and that they who do not act thus, deserve not the Title of *True Deists*.

PAGE 33 THE Doctor, after he has himself, giv'n us a consistent Scheme of *Deism*, says, " There is *now* no such Thing, as " a consistent Scheme of *Deism* : That which alone was " *once* such — ceases *now* to be so, after the Appearance " of Revelation. " If Christianity, as well as *Deism*, consists in being govern'd by the original Obligation of the moral Fitness of Things, in Conformity to the Nature, and in Imitation of the perfect Will of God, then they both must be the same ; but if Christianity consists in being govern'd by any other Rule, or requires any other Things, has not the Dr. himself giv'n the Advantage to *Deism* ?

THESE *True Christian Deists*, as, I think, the Dr. ought to call them, say, that tho' the Dr's Discourse is chiefly levell'd against them ; yet he can't differ with them, without differing from himself ; and condemning in one Part of his elaborate Treatise, what he has approv'd in the other. For,

IF Christianity has not, *say they*, destroy'd Mens moral Agency, or forbid them to act as moral Agents, they must now, as well as formerly, judge of the Will of God, by that Reason given them by an All-gracious God, to distinguish between Good and Evil ; the only Things to which the Precepts of a Being, who, as the Dr. owns, is incapable of acting arbitrarily, can extend ; and these *Deists* agree with the Dr. in his two first Propositions,

upon which, the whole of his Reasoning is built : " That
 this Contents he Dr's " from the eternal, and necessary Differences of Things,
 " there

‘ there naturally arise certain moral Obligations ; which
 “ are of themselves incumbent on all rational Creatures,
 “ antecedent to all positive Institution, and to all Expectation of Reward and Punishment. ” And,

“ THAT the same eternal moral Obligations, which
 “ arise necessarily from the natural Differences of Things,
 “ are moreover the express Will and Command of God
 “ to all rational Creatures : ” And accordingly they judge
 of the positive Will of God, from those eternal moral
 Obligations, which arise necessarily from the natural Differences of Things ; which being incumbent on all rational Creatures, antecedent to all positive Institution, can’t but be so knowable by them ; and having, agreeable to the Dr’s Direction, thus chosen their Religion ; *they say*,
 ’Tis impossible for them (since there can’t be two Originals of the same Thing) to choose that Religion from external Revelation, which they have already chosen from internal Revelation ; and if external Revelation can’t alter the Nature of Things, and make that to be fit, which is in itself unfit ; or make that necessary, which is in itself unnecessary ; it can only be a Transcript of the Religion of Nature ; and so every Thing it says, is to be judg’d of by the Reason, and Nature of Things ; otherwise, say they, we might be oblig’d to admit Things, which, for ought we know, are as necessarily false, as God is true ; since “ all Doctrines inconsistent with Morality, are, *as the Dr. justly observes*,
 “ as certainly, and necessarily false, as God is true. ” pag. 113.

BESIDES, if these moral Obligations, which of themselves are incumbent on all rational Creatures, and which likewise shew themselves from their internal Excellency, to be the Will of God ; are as evident, as the Sun is bright : How can Men, say these *Deists*,

B b b

believe

believe on lesser Evidence, what they know before to be certain on the greatest ; in this Case, must not Faith be swallow'd up by Knowledge ; and Probability by Demonstration ?

- THESE *Deists* intirely agree with the Dr, when he asserts,
 113. that “ Some Doctrines are in their own Nature *necessarily*,
 “ *and demonstrably* true ; such as are all those which concern the Obligation of plain *moral Precepts* ; And these
 “ neither need, nor can receive any stronger Proof from
 “ Miracles, than what they have already (tho’ not, perhaps, so clearly indeed to all Capacities ;) from the
 “ Evidence of right Reason. Other Doctrines are in their
 “ own Nature *necessarily false, and impossible to be true* ;
 “ such as are all *Absurdities and Contradictions*, and all
 “ Doctrines that tend to promote Vice ; and these can
 “ never receive any Degree of Proof from all the Miracles in the World.” But as to what the Dr. adds,
 114. “ That Other Doctrines are in their own Nature *indifferent*,
 “ *or possible, or, perhaps, probable* to be true ; and
 “ those cou’d not have been known to be positively true,
 “ but by the Evidence of Miracles, which prove them to
 “ be certain.” Here these *Deists* beg Leave to differ with him, as to any Doctrines, in their own Nature indifferent, being the Will of God ; for that wou’d be to suppose, what the Dr. has prov’d to be impossible, that God acts arbitrarily, and out of meer Wilfulness. And here they wou’d
 306. ask him, since, as he owns, “ Evil Spirits can do Miracles,
 312. “ and the Nature of the Doctrine to be prov’d to be divine,
 “ must be taken into Consideration ; how Miracles can prove a Doctrine, relating to indifferent Things, to be from God ? Or, how there can be any such Doctrines in the
 184. Christian Religion, if what he says be true ; “ That every
 “ one

“ one of the Doctrines it teaches, as Matter of Truth, has
 “ a natural Tendency, and a direct powerful Influence to
 “ reform Mens Lives, and correct their Manners. This,
adds he, “ is the great End, and ultimate Design of all
 “ true Religion : And 'tis a great and fatal Mistake to
 “ think that any Doctrine, or any Belief whatever, can
 “ be any otherwise of any Benefit to Men, than as it is
 “ fitted to promote this main End. ”

THIS supposes Men, by their Reason, are not only able to know, that it is repugnant to the Nature of God, to require any Thing of them, except it has a natural Tendency, and a direct powerful Influence to reform their Lives, or correct their Manners ; but likewise to discern what Doctrines have this Tendency ; and that, if, upon Examination, they find every Doctrine contain'd in Scripture has this Tendency, they may, then, safely pronounce them all to be divine ; this previous Examination, therefore, is highly necessary to prevent what he justly calls a *fatal Mistake*.

THE Difference between those, who wou'd engross the Name of Christians to themselves, and these *Christian Deists*, as I may justly call them ; is, that the former dare not examine into the Truth of Scripture Doctrines, lest they shou'd seem to question the Veracity of the Scriptures ; whereas the Latter, who believe not the Doctrines, because contain'd in Scripture ; but the Scripture, on Account of the Doctrines ; are under no such Apprehension : For having critically examin'd those Doctrines by that Reason, which God has giv'n them to distinguish Religion from Superstition ; they are sure not to run into any Errors of Moment ; notwithstanding the confess'd Obscurity of the Scriptures ; and those many Mistakes that have crept into the Text, whether by Accident, or Design.

314. THE Dr. says, " The moral Part of our Saviour's Doctrine
 " wou'd have appear'd infallibly true, whether he had ever
 " work'd Miracles, or no. The rest of his Doctrines was
 " what evidently tended to promote the Honour of God,
 " and the Practice of Righteousness amongst Men. There-
 " fore That Part also of his Doctrine was possible, and
 " very probable to be true; but yet it could not from
 " thence be known to be certainly true; nor ought to have
 " been receiv'd as a Revelation from God, unless it had
 " been prov'd by undeniable Miracles.

HERE the *Deists* can, by no Means, come into the Dr's Distinction, between the moral Part of our Saviour's Doctrine, and that Part which evidently tends to promote the Honour of God, and the Practice of Righteousness; it being manifestly a Distinction without any Difference: And if the whole of Religion consists in the Honour of God, and the Good of Man, which he is far from denying; nothing can more effectually strike at the Certainty of all Religion, than the supposing, that Mankind cou'd not be certain, that whatever evidently tended to promote the Honour of God, and the Practice of Righteousness, was the Will of God, 'till they were convinc'd of it by undeniable Miracles.

'Tis possible, *say they*, a Man may doubt, whether there is a God; but none sure, who believe One, can doubt, but that 'tis demonstrably fit, just, and reasonable for Men, to do every Thing, that evidently tends to promote the Honour of God, and the Practice of Righteousness. And, if
 63. " the Mind of Man, *as the Dr. says*, can't avoid giving its
 " Assent to the eternal Law of Righteousness; " can the
 Mind of Man avoid assenting to the Practice of Righteousness as his indispensable Duty? But if it be but probable, that whatever evidently tends to promote the Honour of

God, and the Practice of Righteousness, is from God; it can't be more than probable, that Miracles done in their Behalf are from God. Does not the Dr. here destroy the Certainty of these Doctrines, which he had before demonstrated; and this too only to prove their Probability?

THESE *Christian Deists* own the Dr. is in the right, for contending, that the necessary Relation that is between Things, makes some Actions moral, and others immoral; but then they wou'd ask, Whether there be any other Way to distinguish them, but from their Nature and Tendency; for they can't but conclude, that those which evidently tend to promote the Honour of God, and the Practice of Righteousness, are plain moral Duties, and perpetually oblige. And,

" If no Miracles, *as the Dr. owns*, can prove a Doctrine PAG. 315!
" that's vicious in its Tendency and Consequences, to be
" from God;" must not, *say they*, that Doctrine, which
has the contrary Tendency and Consequences, be from
God; tho' ever so many Miracles are done in Opposition
to it? And,

THEY likewise *say*, As evidently as God is not only a good and perfect, but also the only perfect Being; so evident is it, that every Doctrine, that carries any Degree, much more the highest Degree of Goodness and Perfection in it, has the Character of Divinity impress'd on it; and therefore, can't agree with the Dr; " That neither can any PAG. 221.
" Degree of Goodness, and Excellency in the Doctrine it-
" self, make it certain, but only highly probable to come
" from God."

IF no Miracles can prove any indifferent Thing to be the Will of God; and all that evidently tends to promote the Honour of God, and the Practice of Righteousness, are plain,

Christianity as old as the Creation. . VOL. I.

plain moral Duties, as the Dr. contends; and all such Duties neither need, nor can receive any stronger Proof from Miracles, than what they have already from the Evidence of right Reason; how can Miracles, *say these Deists*, have any other Use, than to make Men consider the Nature, and Tendency of a Doctrine; and judge from thence whether it be from God? But,

ALLOWING the Dr. what *Hypothesis* he pleases, in relation to Miracles; yet if the Doctrines themselves, from their internal Excellency, do not give us a certain Proof of the Will of God, no traditional Miracles can do it; because one Probability added to another will not amount to Certainty.

B. I thought the Dr. had built his Arguments in Favour of Revelation, upon the Obscurity of the Law of Nature; and wou'd not have declar'd, that " the Reason of all
" Men, every where, as naturally, and necessarily assents
" to it, as all Animals conspire in the Pulse, and Motion of their Heart and Arteries; or as all Men agree in
" their Judgment concerning the Whiteness of Snow, or
" the Brightness of the Sun.

A. HAVE Patience, and You shall see, that *Snow is no longer white, or the Sun bright*; and in Order to it I'll shew You, that the Dr's New Scheme consists in supposing, that
5. tho' " in the original uncorrupted State of human Nature, right Reason may justly be supposed to have been
" a sufficient Guide; and a Principle powerful enough to
" have preserv'd Men in the constant Practice of their Duty;
" yet upon the Fall, Mankind were in a very bad State; as
" wanting greater Help, and Assistance, than the Light of Nature could afford them. And *That* there was plainly want-
1. ing some extraordinary, and super-natural Assistance, that
" was

“ was above the Reach of bare Reason and Philosophy to procure. There was plainly wanting a divine Revelation to recover Mankind out of their universally degenerate State, into a State suitable to the original Dignity of their Nature. ” And again, “ There was plainly wanting a divine Revelation, to recover Mankind out of their universal Corruption and Degeneracy. ” *And in the Margin,* “ A divine Revelation absolutely necessary for the Recovery of Mankind : ” But if a divine Revelation was absolutely necessary to this End, Men were under an absolute Impossibility of recovering without it.

THIS is supposing, God had left all Mankind for 4000 Years together, and even the greatest Part to this Day, destitute of sufficient Means to do their Duty, and to preserve themselves from sinking into a corrupted and degenerate State; and that it was impossible for them when thus sunk, to recover themselves; and yet that God (their Duty being the same after, as before the Fall,) expected Impossibilities from them; viz. either to preserve themselves from thus falling; or if fallen, to recover themselves. But if they had not Power to do This, and it was not their Fault, that they at first were in; and after remain'd in what he calls a State of universal Degeneracy and Corruption, this must then be the State God design'd they shou'd be in: And it wou'd seem not only to be in vain, but a Crime in them, to endeavour to change that State, in which, God, of his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, thought fit to place them. But,

IF Men alike, at all Times, owe their Existence to God, they at all Times must be created in a State of Innocence, capable of knowing, and doing all God requires of them; and we must conclude from the Wisdom and Goodness of God, that he will at no Time command any Thing, not fit

fit for him to command, or for Man to do ; and therefore, cou'd we suppose some Things commanded by external Revelation, which were not commanded by the Light of Nature ; we must conclude, that 'till then it was not fit for God to command them, or for Man uncommanded to do them.

THE Dr. to shew the Fault was not in Mankind, but in
 pag. 228. the Guide God gave them, says, " The Light of Nature,
 " and right Reason, was altogether insufficient to restore
 " true Piety ; " and as tho' this was not enough, he adds,
 " that the Light of Nature no where appear'd ; " which
 Sentences seem inconsistent, since the first supposes a
 Light, tho' insufficient, appearing to Mens Minds ; but
 the Dr. does not seem to know whether they had no Light
 pag. 214. at all ; or " a Light, which, *he says*, has undeniable De-
 " fects in it.

B. MAY not the Law of Nature be very clear, tho' the
 Light of Nature may be so very dim, as to have undenia-
 ble Defects ?

A. CAN the Law of Nature be clear, and the Light
 of Nature dim ; when the Law of Nature is nothing, but
 what the Light of Nature, or Reason dictates ? Or, as
 Dr. Scot expresses it, " Right Reason pronouncing such
 Christ. Life. " Actions good, and such evil, is the Law of Nature ;
 P. 2. Vol. 1. " and those eternal Reasons, upon which it so pronoun-
 Ch. 2. p. 75. " ces them, are the Creed of Nature ; both which to-
 " gether make *Natural Religion*.

THE Dr. to pursue this Point, and to shew that the Fault
 pag. 176. was not in the Creatures, but the Creator ; says, that " Even
 " those few extraordinary Men of the Philosophers, who
 " did sincerely endeavour to reform Mankind, were them-
 " selves intirely ignorant of some Doctrines, absolutely ne-
 " cessary

“ cessary for bringing about this great End of the Reformation, and Recovery of Mankind: — Their whole Attempt to discover the Truth of Things, and to instruct others therein, was like wandring in the wide Sea, without knowing whither to go, or which Way to take, or having any Guide to conduct them ?

AND that you might be sure, that the Fault was in the eternal, universal, and unchangeable Law of Nature ; he calls those Philosophers, who thus wander'd in the wide Sea, “ wise, brave, and good Men, who made it their Business to study, and practise the Duties of Natural Religion themselves, and to teach, and exhort others to do the like ; ” nay, One wou'd imagine he thought them, notwithstanding their unavoidable Ignorance, inspir'd ; since he says, “ There never was a great Man, but who was inspir'd ; *Nemo unquam magnus Vir sine divino afflatu fuit* : And for this he quotes the Authority of *Cicero*, who, if the Dr's Reasoning is just, was certainly inspir'd. pag. 1674

THE Dr's Scheme outdoes That of the most rigid *Predestinarians* ; for That at all Times saves the Elect : But here are no Elect ; but all, for many Ages, are inextricably involv'd in a most deprav'd, corrupted, and impious State.

THE Dr. justly says, “ Let none on Pretence of maintaining Natural Religion, revile, and blaspheme the Christian ; lest they be found Liars unto God : ” And for the same Reason, may not I say, let none blaspheme Natural Religion ? Tho, if Natural and Reveal'd Religion can differ, it must be a greater Crime to revile a Religion, that is eternal, universal, and unchangeable ; than a Religion that is not so. And, pag. 2414

THO' I pay a due Deference to the Dr's deep Penetration in Matters of Religion, I dare not say, there's the least Difference between the *Law of Nature*, and *the Gospel*; for That wou'd suppose some Defect in one of them, and reflect on the Author of both; who, certainly, was equally good, and equally wise, when he gave the one, as when he gave the other (if it may be call'd another) Law. Nor dare

214. I be so rash, as to charge the Light of Nature with *undeniable Defects*, as the Dr. presumes to do; since, if that Light was sufficient to answer the End design'd by God, which was to be a competent Guide to Men, in relation to their present, and future Happiness; there cou'd be no Deficiency: If not, then there must have been an undeniable Default in the Giver of it, in appointing Means not sufficient to answer their design'd Ends; tho' both Means and Ends were intirely in his Power. Nor dare I say, "There are several necessary Truths, not possible to be discover'd with any Certainty by the Light of Nature;" because God's Means of Information will, and must always bear an exact Proportion to the Necessity of our knowing what we are oblig'd to know; especially touching the

178. *Nature, and Attributes of God*; which, he supposes, "were very difficult for the wisest Men to find out; and more difficult for them to explain." But here I must do the Dr. that Justice, as to observe, that he, in another Place, is so far from finding any such Defect in this Light, even with relation to the Nature and Attributes of God; that

161. he says, "All the heathen World had certain Means of

160. "knowing God; for *That which may be known of God*, "was manifest enough unto Men in all Ages." And if no Age can know more of God, than *that which may be known*; and if that which *may be known* of him was manifest

nifest enough in all Ages ; what Advantage can one Age in this grand Point have above another ? And, therefore, I must conclude,

It can't be imputed to any Defect in the Light of Nature, that the Pagan World ran into Idolatry ; but to their being intirely govern'd by Priests, who pretended Communication with their Gods ; and to have thence their Revelations, which they impos'd on the credulous as divine Oracles : Whereas the Business of the Christian Dispensation was to destroy all those traditional Revelations ; and restore, free from all Idolatry, the true primitive, and natural Religion, implanted in Mankind from the Creation.

THE Dr. however, seems afraid, lest he had allow'd too much to the Light of Nature, in relation to the Discovery of our Duty both to God and Man ; and not left Room for Revelation to make any Addition ; he therefore, supposes, pag. 239^l
 “ there are some Duties, which Nature hints at only in general : ” But, if we can't, without highly reflecting on the Wisdom and Goodness of God, suppose, that he has not, at all Times, giv'n the whole rational Creation a plain Rule for their Conduct, in relation to those Duties they owe to God, themselves, and one another ; must we not suppose Reason, and Religion (that *Rule* of all other *Rules*) inseparable ; so that no rational Creature can be ignorant of it, who attends to the Dictates of his own Mind ; I mean, as far as 'tis necessary for him to know it. An ignorant Peasant may know what is sufficient for him, without knowing as much as the learned Rector of St. *James's*.

Tho' the Dr. says, “ the Knowledge of the Law of Nature is in Fact, by no Means, universal ; ” yet he asserts, that “ Man is plainly in his *own* Nature *an* *account-* pag. 152^l
C c c 2 *table*

“*table Creature* ;” which supposes that the Light of Nature plainly, and undeniably teaches him that Law, for Breach of which he is naturally accountable ; and did not the Dr. believe this Law to be universal, he cou’d not infer a future Judgment from the Conscience *All Men* have of their Actions, or the Judgment they pass on them in their
 152. own Minds ; whereby “*They that have not any Law, are
 “ a Law unto themselves ; their Consciences bearing Witness,
 “ and their Thoughts accusing, or excusing one another :*” Which is supposing but one Law, whether that Law be written on Paper, or in Mens Hearts only ; and that all Men, by the Judgment they pass on their own Actions, are conscious of this Law. And,

THE Apostle Paul, tho’ quoted by the Dr, is so far from favouring his *Hypothesis* of any invincible Ignorance, even in the wisest, and best of the Philosophers ; that he, by saying, *The Gentiles that have not the Law, do by Nature the Things contained in the Law*, makes the Law of Nature and Grace to be the same : And supposes the Reason why they were to be punish’d, was their sinning against
 2. 14. Light and Knowledge. : *That which may be known of God was manifest in them, and when they knew God, they glorify’d him not as God : And they were likewise guilty of
 1. 19. abominable Corruptions, not ignorantly, but knowing the
 Judgment of God, that they who do such Things are worthy of Death.* Had the Dr. but consider’d this self-evident Proposition, that *There can be no Transgression where there is no Law* ; and that an unknown Law is the same as no Law ; and consequently, that all Mankind, at all Times, must be capable of knowing all (whether more, or less,) that God requires : It wou’d have prevented his endeavouring to prove, that, ’till the Gospel Dispensation,

Man-

Mankind were intirely, and unavoidably ignorant of their Duty in several important Points ; and thus charging the Light of Nature with undeniable Defects.

I think it no Compliment to External Revelation, tho' the Dr. design'd it as the highest ; to say, it prevail'd, when the Light of Nature was, as he supposes, in a Manner extinct ; since then an irrational Religion might as easily obtain, as a rational One.

THE Dr, to prove that Revelation has supply'd the Insufficiency, and undeniable Defects of the Light of Nature, refers us to *Phil* 4. 8. which he introduces after this pompous Manner ; " Let any Man of an honest, and pag. 229.
 " sincere Mind consider, whether That practical Doctrine
 " has not, even *in itself*, the greatest Marks of a divine
 " Original, wherein *Whatsoever Things are true, what-* Phil. 4. 8.
 " *soever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just,*
 " *whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are love-*
 " *ly, whatsoever Things are of good Report, if there be*
 " *any Virtue, if there be any Thing praise-worthy ; all*
 " these, and these only, are the Things that are earnestly
 " recommended to Mens Practice.

I wou'd ask the Dr. how he can know what these Things are, which are thus alone earnestly recommended to Mens Practice ; or, why they have, in themselves, the greatest Marks of a divine Original ; but from the Light of Nature ? Nay, how can the Dr. know, there are Defects in the Light of Nature, but from that Light itself ? which supposes this Light is all we have to trust to ; and consequently, all the Dr. has been doing, on Pretence of promoting the Honour of Revelation, is introducing universal Scepticism : And I am concern'd, and griev'd, to see a Man, who had so great a Share of the Light of Nature, im-

imploving it to expose that Light, of which before he had giv'n the highest Commendation ; and which can have no other Effect, than to weaken even his own Demonstration, drawn from that Light, for the Being of a God.

I shall mention but one Text more, which had not the Dr. thought it highly to his Purpose, for shewing the Insufficiency of the Light of Nature ; he wou'd not have usher'd it in after this most solemn Manner : “ When Men have put themselves into this Temper and Frame of Mind, let them try if they can any longer reject the Evidence of the Gospel : *If any Man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine ; whether it be of God.*”

pag. 341.

John 7. 17.

Is it not strange, to see so judicious a Divine write after such a Manner, as if he thought the best Way to support the Dignity of Revelation, was to derogate from the immutable, and eternal Law of Nature ? and while he is depressing it, extol Revelation for those very Things it borrows from that Law ? in which tho' he asserts there are undeniable Defects, yet he owns, that God governs all his own Actions by it, and expects that all Men shou'd so govern Theirs. But,

I find the Dr's own Brother, the Dean of *Sarum*, is intirely of my Mind, as to those two Texts the Dr. quotes ; viz. *Rom. 2. 14.* and *Phil. 4. 8.* As to the first, viz. *Rom. 2. 14.*

Enq. into the
Cause & Origin
of Moral Evil.
p. 154. 155.
156, 157.

he says, “ The Apostle supposes, that the moral Law is founded in the Nature and Reason of Things ; that every Man is endu'd with such Powers and Faculties of Mind, as render him capable of seeing, and taking Notice of this Law ; and also with such a Sense and Judgment of the Reasonableness, and Fitness of conforming his Actions to it, that he cannot but in his own Mind acquit

“quit himself when he does so; and condemn himself when
 “he does otherwise.” And as to the second, *viz.* Phil.
 4. 8. where the same Apostle recommends the Practice of
 Vertue, upon the fore-mention’d Principles of Comeliness
 and Reputation: “These Principles, *says he*, if duly attended
 “to, were sufficient to instruct Men in the Whole of their
 “Duty towards themselves, and towards each other: And
 “they wou’d also have taught them their Duty towards
 “God, their Creator and Governor, if they had diligently
 “persu’d them: For according as the Apostle expresses it,
 “*Rom. 1. 20. The invisible Things of God from the Crea-*
 “*tion of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by*
 “*the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and*
 “*Godhead.* — The same Fitness and Decency that ap-
 “pears in Mens regular Behaviour towards each other, ap-
 “pears also in their Behaviour towards God: And this,
 “likewise, is founded in the Nature and Reason of Things;
 “and is what the Circumstances and Condition they are in
 “do absolutely require. Thus we see wherein Moral Vir-
 “tue, or Good consists, and what the Obligation to it is
 “from its own native Beauty and Excellency.

B. If God, as the Dr. asserts, does abhor all arbitrary
 Commands; and Natural Religion comprehends every Thing
 that is not arbitrary; and withal, is so deeply impress’d on
 Mens Minds, that they can’t violate its Precepts without
 Self-condemnation; I can’t apprehend how these Philoso-
 phers, who made it their Business to study, and practise
 Natural Religion, cou’d be intirely ignorant of any Doe-
 trines absolutely necessary for the Reformation of Mankind:
 Nay, that “their whole Attempt to discover the Truth of
 “Things, was like wandering in the wide Sea, without any
 “Guide; and therefore, I shou’d be glad to know, what are
 those

these absolutely necessary Doctrines, they were thus intirely ignorant of.

16. A. " These Philosophers, *the Dr. says*, had no Knowledge of the whole Scheme, Order, and State of Things." This, I think, may be allow'd ; since I believe there's none at present, who have, or pretend to have so extensive a Knowledge. " But they had no Knowledge of the Method of God's governing the World." Then they must be blind, if living in the World, they did not see how the Things of this World were govern'd by Providence. " Then they did not know the Ground and Circumstances of Mens present corrupt Condition." If so, they did not understand human Nature, and how Prejudices and Passions work on Mankind. " They did not know, *says he*, the Manner of the divine Interposition necessary for their Recovery, and the glorious End, to which God intended finally to conduct them." It must be own'd, they were not in the least acquainted with the Dr's glorious Scheme, of all Mankind's being for four thousand Years together, and the greatest Part too, at present, by the very Frame of their Constitution, and the Condition of their Being, plac'd by God in a most deprav'd, degenerate State ; without Possibility of recovering from it. " But they had, it seems, no Knowledge of God's Design in creating Mankind." Sure, the Dr. had forgot what he quotes from *Cicero* to this Purpose ; "*Ad tuendos conservandosq; homines hominem natum esse. Homines hominum causa sunt generati, ut ipsi inter se alii aliis prodesse possint. Hominem, naturæ obediētem, homini nocere non posse.*" And does not the Dr. maintain the same Thing, in saying, that " God cou'd have no Motive to create Things at first, but only that he might communicate to them his Goodness and Happiness.

" THESE

“THESE Philosophers, *he says*, were ignorant of the original Dignity of human Nature.” And because he frequently insists on it, I shall fully consider this Matter ; and will confess, ’tis probable, they thought that human Nature, Men, at all Times, having the same common Faculties, was always the same. Had they known the sacred Story of *Adam* and *Eve*, that wou’d have confirm’d them in their Sentiments. The most they cou’d perceive by it wou’d be, that the first Pair came into the World in every Sense naked, destitute of all that Knowledge, Experience gave their Posterity ; and therefore, God, the better to support them in this State of universal Ignorance, planted a Garden for them ; that they might live on the Fruit of it : How weak was their Reason, how strong their Appetites ! when they cou’d not abstain (the sole Command giv’n them) from the Fruit of but one Tree ; in a Garden too, where must needs be an infinite Variety, and the choicest Fruit !

THESE Philosophers wou’d have been at a Loss, to conceive, how *Eve* cou’d entertain a Conference with a Serpent (incapable of human Voice) even before Consent had giv’n any Meaning to Sounds. And they wou’d be apt to ask, Why, tho’ Custom had made it shameful to go without Cloaths in those Places where Cloaths are worn ; the first Pair shou’d nevertheless, tho’ they knew not what Cloaths were, be asham’d to be seen uncloath’d by one another, and by God himself ? So that, when *They heard the Voice of God walking in the Garden, in the Cool of the Evening*, (a strange Representation these Philosophers wou’d think of God !) *they hid themselves from his Presence* : Nay, God himself, their *Fig-leave Aprons*, which they, (having, it seems, all Things necessary for sewing) *sew’d together*,

Christianity as old as the Creation. VOL. I.

ther, not being sufficient to hide their Shame, *made them Coats of the Skins of the Beasts*, newly created in Pairs. And they wou'd, likewise, desire to be inform'd, how *Eve*, before her Eyes were open'd, *saw that the Tree was good for Food*; and that *It was pleasant to the Eyes, and a Tree to be desir'd to make one wise*.

UPON the whole, I grant, that these Philosophers wou'd be so far from finding out this original Dignity in the first Pair, that they wou'd be apt to think, by the Serpent's so easily imposing on her, that the original serpentine Nature, was too subtil for the original human Nature; and that there being nothing done by any Serpent since the Fall, which cou'd occasion the Precept of Mens being bid to be as *wise as Serpents*, it must allude to this Transaction between the Woman and the Serpent; tho' they cou'd never come into the Belief of the *Ophitæ* (with whom the *Marcionites* may be join'd) who thought, that *Wisdom* herself was the Serpent, which they preferr'd to Christ, as teaching them to know Good and Evil; and designing for them Immortality and Deity; and foretelling that *Adam*, tho' threaten'd with certain *Death on the Day he eat the forbidden Fruit*, *shou'd not then dye*; who accordingly liv'd after that Sentence about 900 Years. And that *Moses's* erecting the brazen, healing Serpent, was in Honour of this Serpent; who design'd so much Good to Mankind.

B. THESE Philosophers wou'd be grossly mistaken, did they believe this done by a Serpent: We say, it was the Devil, in the Shape of a Serpent, that tempted them.

A. THESE Philosophers, indeed, wou'd see, that the Christians are now asham'd of the literal Interpretation of this Story; tho' St. *Paul* was of another Mind, who expressly says, *The Serpent deceiv'd Eve thro' Subtilty*. And they, per-

happ

haps, wou'd ask, Whether it was the Devil, who is said to be *more subtil than any Beast of the Field*; since it was this subtil Beast that said to the Woman, *Ye shall* Gen. 3.4. 5. *not surely die.* And it was upon the Woman's saying, *The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat*; that the Lord said to the Serpent, *Because Thou hast done this, thou art* — Ver. 13. *curst above all the Cattle, and above every Beast of the Field: Upon thy Belly thou shalt go, and Dust thou shalt eat* — Ver. 14. *all the Days of thy Life.* Does this Character agree to an immaterial, immortal Being? Did he all the Days of his Life go upon his Belly, and eat Dust? Does not God, continuing his Discourse to the Serpent, say, *I will put Enmity between thee, and the Woman; between thy Seed, and her Seed; it shall bruise thy Head, and thou shalt bruise his Heel?* And is not this the Consequence of Serpents going on their Belly? Do they not frequently bite Men by the Heel; especially in hot Countries, where Serpents are numerous, and Mens Heels bare? Why shall *thy Seed*, not signify *thy Seed*; but the Seed of a Being not mention'd in all this Story; and who has no Seed, but metaphorical Seed; which, since the Woman's Seed is taken literally, wou'd be immediately changing the Meaning of the Word *Seed*? Does this Text afford the least Argument, to imagine God did not as much speak to the Serpent, as to *Adam* and *Eve*? If a Book is to be interpreted thus, especially in relation to historical Facts; how can we, these Philosophers wou'd say, be sure of its Meaning in any one Place? Besides, wou'd they not ask, Why the whole Race of Serpents shou'd be curs'd for the Crime of a fallen Angel?

B. They might as well ask, Why all other Animals shou'd bring forth in Pain, for the Fault of *Eve*? For had Nature form'd all Females at first, as they have been ever

since *Eve* eat the forbidden Fruit, none of them, except by Miracles, cou'd be deliver'd without Pain ; no more than Serpents, had they at first, been form'd, as at present, creep otherwise than they do.

A. THOSE Philosophers, perhaps, wou'd not think the Matter a Jot mended, by substituting (did the Story afford Room for it) a Devil, instead of a Serpent ; since they cou'd not see, how an infinitely good God cou'd permit a most malicious cunning Spirit to work on the Weakness of a Woman, just plac'd in a new World ; without interposing in this unequal Conflict, or giving Notice of any such wicked Spirit ; Angels, neither good, or bad, being mention'd in the History of the Creation : And yet that after the Fact was committed, God shou'd thus revenge it on all their innocent Posterity for ever ; by *curfing the Ground*, &c.

WHAT wou'd seem to them most unaccountable is, That God shou'd continue to suffer this subtil, and malignant Spirit, endow'd with an universal Knowledge of what is past, and a deep Penetration into Futurity ; to range about deceiving, and circumventing Mankind ; who, having a Capacity vastly superior to them, is continually sowing the Seeds of Mischief, and scattering the Poison of universal Discord ; making use of those very Men as his Instruments, whose profess'd Business it is, to promote universal Concord.

THE poor *Indians*, You know, when our Missionaries give such an Account of the Devil, say, “ Is not your God
“ a good God, and loves Mankind ? Why does he then
“ permit this Devil to be continually doing them such in-
“ finite Hurt ? Why is he not put under Confinement, if
“ not depriv'd of a Being, of which he has made himself
“ unworthy ? With us One, who does not hinder a Mis-

“ chief, when it is in his Power, is thought not much better
 “ than he who does it.

BUT to return to the Dr, where is the Difference in Relation to the Goodness of God, and the Happiness of Mankind, between God's creating them in a State, as he calls it, of universal Degeneracy and Corruption ; or causing them by the Folly of *Adam*, which infinite Wisdom cou'd not but foresee, to fall unavoidably into this bad State ? What Dignity, what Perfection cou'd *Adam's* Nature have, that the Nature of his Posterity has not ? Are they not as much fram'd after the Image of their Maker ? Are not their Souls as much immediately from God as *Adam's* ? And are not their Bodies exactly made after the same Manner ? Were not all other Animals at first created by God as well as Men ? Had these any Dignity, or Perfection in their Animal Nature, which the same Creatures since have not ? Besides, is not this suppos'd high State of Perfection in *Adam*, giving the Lye to the History ? since this very perfect Man, notwithstanding all the original Dignity of his Nature, had no better Excuse for his yielding to the first Temptation, than that *the Wo-* Gen 3. 12.
man, whom Thou gavest to be with me, gave me of the Tree, and I did eat. How can we suppose his Understanding was in the least impair'd by this Crime, since God himself says (tho' to whom it does not appear) *Behold the Man is become like one of us, to know Good* — Ver. 22.
and Evil ; and to prevent his being so, both for Immortality as well as Knowledge, *God placed Cherubims* — Ver. 24.
with a flaming Sword, which turned every Way to keep the Way of the Tree of Life. Wou'd it not be very strange, that his Posterity (while his Understanding receiv'd no Hurt,) shou'd suffer so greatly in theirs ; as the Dr
 wou'd.

would have it thought? Indeed, St. *Austin* supposes, that *Adam* before the Fall could have erected his *Membrum genitale ad voluntatis nutum*; and that Motions of the Flesh were perfectly subordinate to his Will, like his Fingers. But this Notion not being orthodox at present, and the Loss of this Faculty no ways infers the Loss of Understanding; I may venture to say, that the Dr's Description of human Nature in all, but one Pair, (and that too, perhaps, but for a Day,) is a Libel on the Dignity of human Nature; and an high Reflection on the Wisdom and Goodness of its Author; in placing them, without any Fault of theirs, in an unavoidable State of Degeneracy and Corruption for 4000 Years together, and continuing the greatest Part still in the same State.

BUT let us see, whether the Dr. has better Success with his other Arguments, by which he endeavours to curtail the universal Goodness of God; and, therefore, I shall take Notice of two other Things, which he insists on, to shew the gross, and unavoidable Ignorance of the Philosophers, in the most momentous Points of Religion:

2. The first is, " That, which of all Things the best, and " wisest of the Philosophers were entirely, and unavoid- " ably ignorant of; and yet was of the greatest Impor- " tance for sinful Men to know; viz. *The Method, by " which such as have erred from the right Way, and have " offended God, may yet restore themselves to his Favour.*"
3. And here he concludes, " That there arises from Nature " no sufficient Comfort to Sinners, but an anxious, and " endless Solicitude, about the Means of appeasing the " Deity.

To answer the Dr, I need only quote what another able Divine, writing on the same Subject of Natural, and

Re-

Reveal'd Religion, says, " I affirm, it is an Article of Na-
 tural Religion, that Forgiveness does certainly follow
 Repentance. If God be a merciful, and benign Being,
 he will accept the Payment we are able to make; and
 not insist on impossible Demands, with his frail, bank-
 rupt Creatures. No generous Man, but will forgive
 his Enemy, much more his Child; if he disapproves
 the Wrong he has done, is really griev'd for it, is de-
 sirous to make Amends, even by suffering for the Ho-
 nour of the Person injur'd. How much more shall God
 forgive all Persons thus dispos'd, and reform'd; since
 there's no Generosity in Man, but what is, with his
 Nature, infus'd into him by God.

Not only Mercy, but Wisdom will effectually dis-
 pose God to forgive the Penitent, because the Crea-
 ture reform'd by Penitence is such as it ought to be,
 and such as God willeth it; which being so, it can
 be no Wisdom in God to afflict it unnecessarily. 'Tis
 not Justice, but Rage, to punish where the Person is
 already mended. When we argue thus, from any of
 the known, and certain Attributes of God, we are as-
 sure of the Conclusion, as if the Thing was to be dis-
 cern'd by Sense; since no sensible Thing is more cer-
 tain, than the Attributes of God.

Mr. Lock has the same Sentiments, and says, " God
 had, by the Light of Reason, reveal'd to all Mankind,
 who wou'd make use of that Light, that he was Good,
 and Merciful. The same Spark of the divine Nature,
 and Knowledge in Man, which making him a Man,
 shewed him the Law he was under as a Man; shewed
 him also the Way of atoning the merciful, kind, com-
 passionate Author, and Father of him, and his Being,
 when

*Key of Nat.
and Rev. Re-
lig. p. 85, 86.*

*Reasonable,
of Christia-
nity, &c.
p. 255, 256.*

Christianity as old as the Creation. . VOL. I.

“ when he had transgressed that Law. He that made Use
“ of this Candle of the Lord, so far as to find what was
“ his Duty ; cou’d not miss to find also the Way to
“ Reconciliation and Forgiveness, when he had fail’d of
“ his Duty. —

“ THE Law is the eternal, immutable Standard of
“ Right. And a Part of that Law is, that a Man shou’d
“ forgive, not only his Children, but his Enemies ; upon
“ their Repentance, asking Pardon, and Amendment. And
“ therefore, he cou’d not doubt, that the Author of this
“ Law, and God of Patience and Consolation, who is rich
“ in Mercy, wou’d forgive his frail Off-spring ; if they
“ acknowledg’d their Faults, disapproved the Iniquity of
“ their Transgressions, begg’d his Pardon, and resolved in
“ earnest for the future, to conform their Actions to this
“ Rule, which they own’d to be Just and Right. This
“ Way of Reconciliation, this Hope of Atonement, the
“ Light of Nature revealed to them.

HAD the Dr. only said, that we can’t know from the
Light of Nature, that *There’s more Joy in Heaven over
one Sinner that repents, than over ninety nine just Per-
sons, who need no Repentance* ; That, if strictly taken, might,
perhaps, be better disputed ; but nothing, sure, can be
more shocking, than to suppose the unchangeable God,
whose Nature, and Property is ever to forgive, was not,
at all Times, equally willing to pardon repenting Sinners ;
and equally willing they shou’d have the Satisfaction of
knowing it.

IF *God’s Ways are equal*, and he has, at one Time as
well as another, the same Goodness for the Sons of Men,
in relation to their eternal Happiness ; how can we sup-
pose he left all Mankind, for so many Ages, and the

greatest Part, even at present, in a most miserable State of Doubt, and Uncertainty, about the Pardon of Sin; and consequently, about the Possibility of any Man's being sav'd? If this Notion, that even the best, and wisest of Mankind, were, not only absolutely, but most absolutely ignorant of That, which of all Things, it was of the greatest Importance for Mankind to know, be not inconsistent with the divine Goodness; I am at a Loss to know what is so.

If the Design of God, in communicating any Thing of himself to Men, was their Happiness; wou'd not that Design have oblig'd him, who, at all Times, alike desires their Happiness, to have, at all Times, alike communicated it to them? If God always acts for the Good of his Creatures, what Reason can be assign'd, why he shou'd not from the Beginning, have discover'd such Things, as make for their Good; but defer the doing it till the Time of *Tiberius*? since the sooner This was done, the greater wou'd his Goodness appear to be: Nay, is it consistent with infinite Benevolence, to hide That for many Ages, which, he knew, was as useful at first to prevent; as afterwards it cou'd be, to put a Stop to any Thing he dislik'd.

AND, indeed, without denying that God, at all Times, intended Mankind That Happiness, their Nature is capable of; we must allow, that, at all Times, he has giv'n them the Means of obtaining it, by the Rules he has prescrib'd them for their Conduct; and consequently, these Rules must have been discoverable at all Times. For, if God acts upon rational Motives, must not the same Motives, which oblig'd him to discover any Thing that's for the Good of Mankind, have oblig'd him to discover every Thing that is so; and that too, after the same plain Manner: And not do

Christianity as old as the Creation. VOL. I.

as it were, grudgingly, little by little ; here a Bit, and there a Bit ; and that to one favourite Nation only, under the Vail of Types, Allegories, &c. and at last, tho' he discover'd some Things more plainly, yet it was but to a small Part of Mankind, the Bulk of them to this Day remaining in deplorable Ignorance.

B. ANOTHER Argument the Dr brings for the undeniable Defect of the Light of Nature is, that tho' it is *evident* from this Light, that *God ought to be worshipp'd* ; yet “ *the Manner*, in which he might be *acceptably worshipp'd*, the “ *wisest, and best of the Philosophers were intirely, and* “ *unavoidably ignorant of.*

A. WHO can forbear pitying these unhappy Philosophers, indispensably oblig'd to worship God acceptably ; and yet, hard Fate ! unavoidably ignorant how to perform this acceptable Worship ? But,

If God cou'd not will to be worshipp'd, without willing some Way, or other, of being worshipp'd ; and if he left it to the Light of Nature to discover how he wou'd be worshipp'd ; cou'd That be for any other Reason, but because it was acceptable to him, to be worshipp'd as that Light directed ? Is it not a Contradiction, to suppose God wou'd be acceptably worshipp'd, and yet let Men, even the best, be intirely, and unavoidably ignorant, how to worship him acceptably ? Does not the Light of Nature tell us, that God is a Being of infinite Wisdom and Goodness ; and that all his natural Faculties are directed by these two Attributes, to serve the Purposes of Benevolence ? how then can we be ignorant, what Worship, what Service, we are to render him ? Can we doubt, if we endeavour to have the same Frame of Mind, and govern our Actions by the same Law of Benevolence ; whether we shall obtain his Favour ?
since

since to imitate him, is to pay him the highest Adoration; and to keep his Commandments shews the highest Veneration. 'Tis for such Reasons as these, that Dr Scot intirely differs from this learned Author, and says, " If we truly understand
 " what God is, we can't but apprehend what Worship is
 " suitable to him, from the eternal Congruity and Propor-
 " tion, that there is between Things and Things, as ob-
 " vious to the Mind, as Sounds, and Colours are, to the
 " Ears and Eyes.

Christ. Life.
 P. 2. Vol. 1.
 Ch. 6. p. 323.

B. DR Clark owns, that " Obedience to the Obliga-
 " tions of Nature, and Imitation of the moral Attri-
 " butes of God; the wisest Philosophers easily knew,
 " was, undoubtedly, the most acceptable Service to God; "
 and what he insists upon as necessary, is only some ex-
 ternal Adoration.

pag. 178.
 pag. 179.

A. BUT since external Adoration can't be perform'd, but by external Signs, these must be different in different Places; because what are Marks of Respect in one Country, are Marks of Disrespect in another; or, at least, look ridiculous.

B. THE Reason that the Dr gives, why the wisest Men were intirely, and unavoidably ignorant, how God wou'd be acceptably worshipp'd with external Adoration, is, because they fell lamentably into the Practice of the most foolish
 Idolatry.

pag. 179.

A. Never any before, call'd the Worshipping of Idols, the Worshipping of the true God, tho' unacceptably. But however, since You lay such Strefs on this Discourse, I shall consider what the Dr says, to prove his Paradox.

" Plato, says he, after having deliver'd almost divine
 " Truths, concerning the Nature, and Attributes of the
 " supreme God, weakly advises Men to worship likewise

pag. 179.

pag. 181.

“ inferior Gods ; nor dar’d to condemn the worshipping
“ even of Statues. — And so he spoil’d the best Philoso-
“ phy in the World, by adding Idolatry to that Worship,
“ which he had wisely, and bravely before prov’d to be due
“ to the Creator of all Things.” But cou’d he be intirely,
and unavoidably ignorant of, what he had bravely, and
wisely prov’d ?

2. “ *Socrates*, he says, superstitiously offer’d a Cock to *Escu-*
“ *lapius*, unless it was done in Mockery to him, looking
“ on Death to be his greatest Deliverance : ” But since he
doubted what *Socrates* intended, why does he instance in
him, as One intirely, and unavoidably ignorant, how God
was to be acceptably worshipp’d ?

3. “ *Cicero*, he says, allow’d Men to continue the Idolatry
“ of their Ancestors, advis’d them to conform themselves
“ to the superstitious Religion of their Country. — In
“ which he fondly contradicts himself, by inexcusably com-
“ plying with the Practices of those Men, whom, in many
“ of his Writings, he largely, and excellently proves to be
“ extremely foolish, upon the Account of those very Practi-
“ ces. ” But does this prove any unavoidable Ignorance in
Cicero, in relation to the Worship of the true God ? But only
that he, as a Philosopher, not only knew, but spoke the
Truth ; tho, as a Priest, he thought fit to dissimble ; perhaps,
he suppos’d it not prudent, without some such softning Ex-
pressions, so plainly to attack the reigning Superstition. But,

SINCE the Reasoning of the ancient Philosophers fully
shew’d their Sense, these Reflections might have been spar’d ;
were it but for the sake of some modern Philosophers ; whose
philosophical Faith is as little reconcileable with the *Creeds*
and *Litanies*, they, as Priests, solemnly repeat ; and the *Ar-*
ticles they as solemnly subscribe ; as any Thing *Cicero*, the
Priest,

Priest, cou'd say in Opposition to *Cicero*, the Philosopher : Who describes our moral Obligations after so beautiful a Manner ; and by such plain, and irresistable Arguments, shews the necessary Connexion between Virtue and Happiness, Vice and Misery ; as can't but make us highly delighted with the One ; and create in us a just Aversion to the Other.

THE Dr had here a fair Opportunity, of shewing the Absurdity of arguing from what even the best of Men say, when 'tis not safe to talk otherwise. This had been more agreeable to his Candor, than taking an Handle from hence to expose the Light, and Law of Nature, as well as those great Men ; to whom we are infinitely oblig'd, for writing under these Disadvantages so freely as they have done ; especially *Cicero* ; from whom the Fathers have borrow'd their best Arguments against Paganism. *Arnobius* says, *Arnob. contra :* that if his Works had been read, as they ought, by the *Gent.* l. 3. p. 120. Heathens, there had been no Need of Christian Writers. And in Answer to those *Gentiles*, who seeing the Use the Christians made of them, were for soliciting the Senate to burn, or otherwise suppress them : He says, *That were, not to defend the Gods, but to fear the Testimony of Truth.* Which Pagan Method has not only been us'd ever since, by all who fear'd the Testimony of Truth, to the Loss of an immense Treasure of Learning ; but they have improv'd it too ; and been for burning of Men, as well as Books : And thereby introduc'd a Superstition more abominable than Paganism. And give me Leave to add, that

IN Old *Rome*, as long as there was Civil Liberty, there was an intire Liberty of Conscience ; and even the Priests of the National Church, provided they comply'd with its Ceremonies, had no speculative *Creeds*, or *Articles*, to subscribe,

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scribe; but were intirely free to maintain what Opinions they pleas'd: Of this, *Cicero* is a remarkable Instance; who, in his Book *de Divinatione*, exposes the Superstition of his own Country-men, and ridicules those Miracles, with which the Annals of the Church-Priests were fill'd; And he, tho' a Priest himself, every where treats his Brethren with great Freedom; and in his Address to them, speaking of an ambitious, intreaguig Priest, who wou'd hide his Malice under the Cover of Religion, (for some such there have been in all Religions); says, "If *Publius Claudius* is to defend his pestilent, and deadly Ministry by the sacred Name of divine Religion, when 'tis impossible for him to do it by human Equity; 'tis high Time to look for other Ceremonies, other Ministers of the immortal Gods, and other Interpreters of Religion." But to return,

THE Dr having thus expos'd the Light of Nature, and, as he thinks, shewn its undeniable Defects in the Persons of these Philosophers; demands what Grounds our modern Deists have to imagine, that if they themselves had liv'd without the Light of the Gospel, they shou'd have been wiser than *Plato*, *Socrates*, and *Cicero*; but sure no great Wisdom is requir'd to know the Law of Nature, was it but half as plain, as the Dr, from Bishop *Cumberland*, has represented it; and which no well-meaning *Gentile*, who did by Nature the Things contain'd in the Law, cou'd be ignorant of. And,

pag. 50: I am surpris'd to find the Dr arguing as if that Law, "which is a most perfect Rule to the most perfect Being; is not perfect enough for his imperfect Creatures," tho' their whole Perfection consists in imitating him, and governing their Actions by the same Rule: A Rule, which,

it can't be deny'd, had Mankind govern'd their Actions by it, wou'd have render'd them as perfect as their Nature was capable of: I shou'd be glad to know, why this Rule has lost its Virtue, and will not now render Men as acceptable to God as ever? But cou'd we suppose a God of infinite Perfection, might ordain an imperfect, or insufficient Rule, for the Actions of his Creatures; Or, which comes to the same, afford them no other Light for the Discovery of it, but what had such undeniable Defects, as made them incapable of knowing their Duty; nor was sufficient to hinder them from falling into, and continuing from Age to Age, in a deplorable State of Corruption; I wou'd ask, whether God did this knowingly, or ignorantly, not foreseeing the Consequences; to suppose the first, is to make God act out of Spite, and Hatred to his Creatures, in bringing them into Being, and making that Being a Curse to them: Or if the last, why were not these Defects supply'd as soon as discover'd? Or, were they not discover'd by infinite Wisdom till these latter Times; and then reveal'd only to a small Number, tho' all Mankind had equal Need of them? And then too, so imperfectly, that Men have ever since been in continual Quarrels, about the Meaning of most of those Things, which are suppos'd to have been added, to supply the Defects of the Law of Nature?

WHAT human Legislator, if he found a Defect in his Laws, and thought it for the Good of his Subjects to add new Laws, wou'd not promulgate them to all his People? Or, what Parent wou'd act after so partial a Manner, as the Dr, in a self-confounding Scheme, supposes the common Parent of Mankind has done? And not let all his Children know as soon as possible, what was for their

com-

mon Good? especially, if they were in such a forlorn, and miserable Condition, as he represents all Mankind to have been in, almost as soon as created.

6. THE Dr very rightly observes, that “ Even among
 “ Men, there’s no earthly Father, but, in those Things
 “ he esteems his own Excellencies, desires, and expects
 “ to be imitated by his Children ; how much more, *says*
 “ *he*, is it necessary, that God, who is infinitely far from
 “ being subject to Passions, and Variableness, as frail Men
 “ are ; and has an infinitely tenderer, and heartier Con-
 “ cern for the Happiness of his Creatures, than mortal
 “ Men can have for the Welfare of their Posterity, must
 “ desire to be imitated by his Creatures in those Perfec-
 “ tions, which are the Foundation of his own unchange-
 “ able Happiness.” How far this Invariableness in God,
 and his great Love for his Creatures, is consistent with
 that Scheme of Things, which the Dr has hitherto ad-
 vanc’d, has, I think, been made appear. We will now
 examine what he adds, to shew that God has an infi-
 nitely more tender, and hearty Concern for the Happi-
 ness of his Creatures, than mortal Men can have for the
 17. Welfare of their Posterity : What he says, is, that “ both
 “ the Necessities of Men, and their natural Notions of
 “ God gave them reasonable Ground to expect, and hope
 “ for a divine Revelation, to recover Mankind out of their
 “ universally degenerate Estate, into one suitable to the
 18. “ original Excellence of their Nature. And that “ it
 21. “ was agreeable to the Dictates of Nature, and right
 “ Reason, to hope for such a divine Revelation ; That
 14. “ it is agreeable to the natural Hopes and Expectations
 “ of Men, that is, of right Reason duly improv’d, to
 “ suppose God making some particular Revelation of his
 “ Will

“ Will to Mankind. — And that this was most suitable
 “ to the divine Attributes ; ” yet notwithstanding these,
 and a great many other fine Sayings to the same Purpose,
 he denies that God was oblig’d to make such a Revelation:
 But, with Submission, what other Reason have we to say,
 God is oblig’d to do any one Thing whatever ; but that ’tis agreeable
 to the natural Notions we have of his Wisdom and Goodness,
 and to the Dictates of Nature and Reason, for him so to do ;
 and if the Necessities of Mankind have always been as great,
 and the Goodness of God always the same ; wou’d not these oblige
 him to have prescrib’d an immediate Remedy to the Disease ;
 and not deferr’d it for four thousand Years together, and then
 apply’d it but to a few, tho’ all had equal Need of it :
 And a Need occasion’d (*as the Dr. supposes*) by God himself,
 in not affording them any other Light, but what was insufficient
 to answer the End for which it was giv’n.

B. THE Dr supposes, that this Revelation was not the Effect
 of God’s *Justice* ; for then it must needs have been pag. 215.
 giv’n in all Ages, and to all Nations ; *but of Mercy, and condescending Goodness.*

A. CAN a Being be denominated merciful, and good, who is so only to a few ; but cruel, and unmerciful to the rest ?
 And certainly, all the Arguments the Dr can urge from the Necessities
 of Mankind, and the abundant Goodness of God, will equally prove,
 that this Revelation, did it teach a New Religion, shou’d be universal ;
 as that it shou’d be at all. But,

IF Revelation was absolutely necessary to recover Mankind,
 out of their universally degenerate, and corrupted State, and
 replace them in a State suitable to the original

Christianity as old as the Creation. VOL. I.

nal Dignity, and Excellency of their Nature; and more effectually to do this, there was instituted an Order of

6. Men, who were to be, as the Dr. calls them, *the Instruments of conveying extraordinary Assistances for this Purpose*; must not Revelation have had its intended Effect; and made Christians, especially where these Instruments of conveying extraordinary Assistances are in great Numbers, and in great Authority; much more perfect, and excellent, than Men cou'd possibly be in, when under Times of unavoidable Corruption? And yet

THE Dr. having taken a large Passage from *Cicero*, where the Orator very rhetorically describes the great Corruptions of his Time, and assigns the Causes thereof; 8. makes this Remark, "*That a livelier Description of the present corrupt State of human Nature is not easily to be met with*;" which, I think, is sufficiently owning, that human Nature at present is far from being exalted to so high a State of Perfection, or in the least mended. And tho' the Dr. frequently quotes *Cicero* for the Support of his Opinion, yet *Cicero* is far from supposing any such Defect in Nature: For a Proof of which, I need only mention

1. these two short Passages. "'Tis impossible to err, as long as we follow the Guidance of Nature. — There's no Man, who following the Conduct of Nature, but may arrive at Perfection." And the Dr. himself quotes a Passage from him, to shew that Nature has not been wanting to declare her Mind; *Multis signis natura declarat quid velit*. And it might be as easily shewn, he as much mistakes the Meaning of those other Philosophers he quotes. And indeed, how cou'd any Men, except they had a very absurd *Hypothesis* to serve, assert, that any Thing cou'd be Mens Duty, they were unavoidably ignorant of? Yet,

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THE Dr, to prove this invincible Ignorance in the *Gentile* World, has frequent Recourse to the Authority of *Lactantius*, a primitive Father, without shewing that he had a greater Regard for Truth than other Fathers : And I am afraid the Dr. himself seems here not much to regard it, in maiming a Sentence of *Lactantius* ; *Maximum itaq; argumentum est, philosophiam neq; ad sapientiam tendere, neq; ipsam esse sapientiam ; quod mysterium ejus, barba tantum celebratur, & pallio.* Whereas the whole Sentence runs thus, *Non est ergo sapientia, si ab hominum cœtu abhorret ; quoniam, si sapientia homini data est, sine ullo crimine omnibus data est ; ut nemo sit prorsus, qui eam capere non possit. At illi [Philosophi] virtutem humano generi datam sic amplexantur, ut soli omnium publico bono frui velle videantur ; tam invidi, quam si velint deligare oculos, aut effodere cæteris, ne solem videant. — Quod si natura hominis sapientiæ capax est ; oportuit opifices, & rusticos & mulieres, & omnes denique qui humanam formam gerunt, doceri, ut sapiant ; populumque ex omni lingua, & conditione, & sexu, & ætate conflare.* Then follows what the Dr. quoted.

pag. 189.

Lactant. Inst. Divin. l. 3. c. 25. N. 2--6. Edit. Cellar.

THIS had been a full Answer to all the Dr. had taken from him ; if not to all the Dr. has said on this Head ; and it plainly shews, this Father here thought, that Wisdom, as it was design'd for all, was within the Reach of all ; and that which the lowest of Mankind cou'd not attain, was neither Wisdom, nor Virtue ; and that those Philosophers, who wou'd confine this universal Light to themselves, were as envious, as if they wou'd exclude others from the Light of the Sun. And that this alone was a sufficient Proof, that their Philosophy consisted only in the Beard, and the Cloak.

Wisd of Solomon 6: 12. & 16.

THIS Father asserts nothing here, but what the wisest of Men had long before own'd, in saying, that *Wisdom is easily seen of them that love her; and found of such as seek her. — She goes about seeking such as are worthy of her; shews herself favourable to them in the Ways; and meeteth them in every Thought.* And,

Burnet de Fide & Offic. Christianorum. p. 98.

WHAT impartial Man, who has compar'd the former, and present Condition of Mankind, can think the World much mended since the Times of *Tiberius*; or tho' ever so well vers'd in Church-History, can, from the Conduct of Christians, find, that they are arriv'd to any higher State of Perfection, than the rest of Mankind; who are suppos'd to continue in their Degeneracy, and Corruption. What was the Opinion of a late eminent Philosopher, as well as Divine, is plain, by his saying, *Si resurgerent Philosophi & Gentilium sapientes, & perlustrato orbe à nobis quærerent, quid profuerit humano generi religio Christiana, quoad mores & vitæ probitatem? quoad pacem & bonum publicum? nos utique appellatis Barbaros per opprobrium: sed nobis barbaris quid præstatis vos Christiani?*

Prefatio ad novissimam Sinicam.

Monfieur *Libnitz*, a great Statesman as well as Philosopher, in comparing the Christians at present, with the Infidels of *China*, does not scruple to give the Preference to the latter, in relation to all *moral Virtues*; — and after having said of them, *Dici enim non potest, quam pulchre omnia ad tranquillitatem publicam, ordinemque hominum inter se, ut quam minimum sibi ipsi incommodent, supra aliarum gentium leges apud Sinenses sint ordinata.* He adds, *Certe talis nostrarum rerum mihi videtur esse conditio, gliscitibus in immensum corruptelis, ut propemodum necessarium videatur missionarios Sinensium ad nos mitti, qui Theologiæ naturalis usum praxinque nos doceant, quemadmodum nos illis mittimus qui Theologiam eos doceant revelatam.* And the

the learned *Huetius* tells us, that “ There’s such a constant Agreement between the *Chinese* themselves, and their Neighbours, as they seem to be all but one Family.”

And,

Navarrette, a *Chinese* Missionary, agrees with *Leibnitz*, and says, that “ It is God’s special Providence, that the *Chinese* did not know what is done in *Christendome* ; for if they did, there wou’d be never a Man among them, but wou’d spit in our Faces.” And he adds, with respect to the Manners of those *European* Christians, who come into the *East Indies*, and of the Converts made by the *Missionaries* ; “ That there are few converted in those Parts, where they converse with the *Europeans* ; and when it happens that any are converted, they prove so bad, it were better they had never been baptiz’d.” And I am afraid, ’tis much the same in relation to the *West Indies*. And,

BISHOP Kidder says of Christians in general, “ That were a wise Man to choose his Religion by the Lives of those who profess it ; perhaps, Christianity wou’d be the last Religion he wou’d choose.” And who, that has been abroad, and compar’d the Lives of Believers and Unbelievers, does not say the same Things ?

AND *Dr. Clark* himself, in the Discourse we are now considering, has sufficiently prov’d, that Man is naturally a social Creature, full of Benevolence, Pity, and Tendernefs ; and he says, that “ Reason, which is the proper Nature of Man, can never lead Men to any Thing else than universal Love, and Benevolence ; and that “ Wars, Hatred, and Violence can never arise, but from extreme Corruptions.” Tho’ there’s no Part of Natural Religion, but highly tends to improve this social, and benign

Tem-

Alpetan. quest.
l. 3. p. 419.

Navarrette's
Acco of China,
in *Churchill's*
Collection of
Voyag. V. 1.
l. 2. c. 13.

pag. 107]

Temper ; yet alas ! we find, that what, in most Places, passes for the Christian Religion, if not the chiefest Part of it, has transform'd this social, and benign Creature into One piece, and cruel ; and made him act with such Rage and Fury against those, who never did, or design'd him the least Injury ; as cou'd not have enter'd into the Hearts of Men to conceive, even tho' they were in the Dr's unavoidable State of Degeneracy and Corruption.

IF People are once persuaded, that what their Priests call *Schism*, *Herefy*, *Infidelity*, &c. tho' held with the utmost Sincerity, are damnable Sins ; it wants not much Skill to persuade them to hate those mortally, whom God, they are already persuaded, will hate to all Eternity ; and that, as they regard the Preservation of the Orthodox Faith, and the saving their own Souls, and the Souls of all that are dear to them, they ought to take the most effectual Methods to root out all such damnable Opinions. 'Tis upon this common Principle, that the *Inquisition* is establish'd ; and the *Papists*, to do them Justice, act up to it ; tho' perhaps, even among them, there are some Lay-men, where Nature is too hard for Principles.

IF once pernicious Opinions are believ'd to be contain'd in any Revelation, they will have the same Effect, as if really there. Has not the Belief of the judicial Power of the Clergy, as to the next World ; and their independent Power in this World, done the same Mischief, as if they had really been contain'd in Scripture ? And if they, who maintain these, and other as vile Maxims, have got Possession of Mens Minds, by ingrossing (not to mention other Arts) the Teaching the Young, as well as Instructing the Old ; what less than a new Revelation can expose their Expositions, or explain away their Explanations of the present
Reve-

Revelation, which have prov'd more fatal to the Happiness of Mankind, than all the Superstitions of the *Pagan* World. Had the *Bees* Speech and Reason, wou'd they, think You, from Age to Age, have continu'd to give the best Part of their Honey to such haranguing Drones, who, for the most part, employ'd their Talents, to set not only Hive against Hive ; but the *Bees* of the same Hive against one another, for such Things as had no other Tendency, than to make the idle Drones lord it over the industrious Bees ? But not to deviate,

We have no great Reason to hope, it will ever be so well with Mankind ; but that there will always be too much Room for such Arguments, as the Dr. urges from the Corruptions of Mankind, for new Revelations. Have not Impostors always made use of this Plea ? Was it not on the Carnality of the primitive Orthodox Christians, that the spiritual *Montanus* founded his new Gospel ; which divided the Christian World for no small Time, and made the celebrated *Tertullian* say ; That “ the Law and Prophets were
“ to be look'd on as the Infancy ; and the Gospel, as it were,
“ the Youth ; but that there was no compleat Perfection to
“ be found, but in the Instruction of the Holy Ghost, who
“ spoke by *Montanus*. See Reeve's Prelim Disc. to Tertul. Apolog. p. 149.

AND it was the ill Lives of the Professors of Christianity, as 'tis own'd by Christian as well as Arabick Writers, which prepar'd the Way, for that Success which *Mabomet* met with ; whose Religion, as it gain'd in a short Time, more Profelites than any other, so it is still gaining Ground : For which Father *Marracci*, who has so well translated, and makes such just Reflections on the *Alchoran*, gives this odd Reason : *Habet nimirum hæc Superstitio* (Mahumedana) Marrac. Pref. ad Prodom. p. 4
quicquid plausibile, ac probabile in Christiana Religione repe-
ritur,

ritur, & quæ Naturæ legi ac lumini consentanea videntur. Mystéria illa Fidei nostræ, quæ primo aspectu, incredibilia, & impossibilia apparent; & præcipue, quæ nimis ardua humanæ naturæ censentur, penitus excludit. Hinc moderni Idolorum Cultores, facilius ac promptius Saracenicam, quam Evangelicam Legem amplectuntur. But,

THE Dr. is so far from solving the Difficulties attending this Scheme, that he quits it, and artfully introduces a new Scene; and tho' he had before laid it down as a most evident Truth, that God does nothing by meer Will and Arbitrariness; yet this new Hypothesis is wholly built on it, in supposing, that in these latter Times, God intended to give some Men, without regard to their Merits, an higher Degree of Happiness than he did the rest; and to shew how consistent this is with Reason, he says, "As God was not oblig'd to make all his Creatures equal, or "to make Men Angels, or to endow all Men with the same "Capacities and Faculties; so he was not bound to make "all Men capable of the *same Degree*, or the *same Kind* of "Happiness; or to afford all Men the very same *Means* "and *Opportunities* of obtaining it.

B. BUT how comes this to be shifting the Scene, and introducing a new Hypothesis?

A. BECAUSE his former supposes Men living and dying in a deprav'd, corrupted, degenerate, and impious State, incapable of Reformation; whereas in this all Men are allow'd to have, in general, the Means of attaining to a certain Degree of Happiness hereafter; whilst Christians alone have in particular the Means and Opportunities of gaining his higher Degree, and Kind of Happiness.

THO' infinite Variety of Creatures, and consequently Inequality, is necessary to shew the great Extent of the divine

vine Goodness, which plainly appears from the beautiful, and well form'd System of the World, and the due Subordination of Things, all contriv'd for the Happiness of the whole; yet sure, it does not from thence follow, that God will not either here, or hereafter, bestow on the rational Creation, all the Happiness their Nature is capable of; since that was the End why God gave it them.

CAN God, who equally beholds all the Dwellers on Earth, free from Partiality and Prejudice; make some People his Favourites, without any Consideration of their Merits; and merely because they believe certain Opinions taught in that Country where they happen to be born; while Others, far the greater Number, shall, from Age to Age, want this Favour; not upon the Account of their Demerits, but because destin'd to live in Places, where God, who always acts from Motives of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, thought it best to conceal from them all such Opinions. What can more represent God as an arbitrary, and partial Being, than thus to suppose, that he vouchsafes not to afford, the greatest Part of Mankind, the Happiness, of which himself had made them capable?

MUST not every One perceive, that this narrow Notion is inconsistent with the Character of a Being of unlimited Benevolence? Is not infinite Goodness always the same? How then can it, in these last Days, make such Inequality among Men? Is not this supposing Inconstancy in the divine Conduct? Is not this Notion repugnant to the natural Idea we have of the divine Goodness? As likewise to those express Texts of Scripture, which declare *God is no Respector of Persons*; that *Every One, of what Nation soever, shall be rewarded according to his Works*? And that *Men are accepted accord-*

to what they have, and not according to what they have not ?

IF God, as the Dr. contends, will judge Men as they are accountable, that is, as they are rational ; must not the Judgment of the most righteous Judge, hold an exact Proportion to the Use they have made of their Reason ? And if Mens State in this Life be a State of Probation, and for that Cause they are made moral Agents, capable of knowing Good from Evil, and consequently, of doing every Thing that's fit to be done ; must they not be dealt with hereafter, according to the Use they have made of their moral Agency ?

How can Men be sure, if God acts thus partially ; that this Partiality may not even now be in Favour of other Countries, than those they live in ; and of other Notions ; which not flowing from the Nature and Reason of Things, we may be wholly unacquainted with ? If Men may lose any Part of God's Favour for Impossibilities, or not observing such Rules as he never gave them ; where shall we stop ? Cou'd I think God so partial and prejudic'd, as most Sects, for their own Sakes, represent him ; how cou'd I admire, love, and adore him, as I ought ? Nay, how can any, who have such unworthy Notions of God, be certain, God's Prejudice and Partiality will be in their Favour ? If You admit any one Imperfection in God ; how can You be sure of his Veracity, Immutability, or any other Perfection whatever.

THO' Dr. *Clark* contends for what terminates in this gross Partiality, as if the whole of Christianity was founded on it ; yet some of our Divines, of the first Rank too, are of a different Opinion ; from two of which, I'll give You the following Quotations.

“ GOD'S

“ God’s Goodness and Mercy (*says Mr. Wharton*) Wharton’s Vol. of Serm. p. 305, &c.
 “ were, from all Ages, equal and uniform ; his Justice
 “ always impartial and universal, in excluding none from
 “ his Favour, but for Reasons common to them with all
 “ Mankind. — The Universality, and Impartiality of
 “ the divine Justice and Favour, is founded on the Ex-
 “ cellency of the divine Nature ; which can’t be sup-
 “ pos’d to want That, which above all is necessary for
 “ the Government of the World ; impartial Justice in the
 “ dispensing of Rewards and Punishments. — All Men
 “ were equally created by God ; and if we respect That
 “ alone, all have an equal Title to his Favour. —
 “ Otherwise we cou’d not but conceive Injustice in God ;
 “ nor were it possible to reconcile such a Partiality with
 “ his infinite Excellency. The Reason why *God is no*
 “ *Respecter of Persons*, is said to be, because *There is no* 2 Chron. 23
 “ *Iniquity with the Lord*. All reasonable Preference of
 “ one Person to another, must be founded on some just
 “ Cause ; otherwise it wou’d be trifling, and fond ; nay,
 “ even unjust, and foolish. — Far be it from us, to ima-
 “ gine any such Imperfections in God ; in him there is
 “ no Variableness, or Shadow of Change. — He ever
 “ proceeds upon fixed, and immoveable Principles ; which
 “ equally serve for all Actions and Causes. — God has
 “ fix’d most impartial Laws of Government ; which uni-
 “ versally affect all the Members of Mankind. — It is
 “ so pleasing a Delusion, to fancy themselves dear to God ;
 “ in an extraordinary Manner, and for unaccountable Rea-
 “ sons ; that ’tis no Wonder many have been tempted to
 “ entertain such a charming Error. — This seduc’d the
 “ *Jews*. — This Prejudice has corrupted great Num-
 “ bers of Christians. — Is God the God of the *Jews*

“ and *Christians* only ? Is he not the God of the *Gen-*
 “ *tiles* also ? Are not his Attributes always unalterable ;
 “ and the Influence of these equally deriv’d down to all
 “ his Creatures ?

Serm. Vol. I. p. 207. THAT celebrated Preacher, Dr. *Ibbott*, affirms, that
 “ ’Tis not our being of any Nation, or any Sect, Mem-
 “ bers of any particular Church, or Society ; that will in-
 “ title us to God’s Favour ; but our working the Work of
 “ God, living up to that Light and Knowledge which He
 “ has afforded us ; and being most punctual, and exact
 “ in the Discharge of those moral Duties, which all Man-
 “ kind, who have any true Notions of God and Religion,
 “ have ever thought themselves oblig’d to.” — *Again*,
 pag. 211. “ Wherever Men fear God, and love one another, they will
 “ be accepted without any Regard to their Country, or Na-
 “ tion ; their Tribe, or Family ; for This is what God
 “ would bring all People to, *from the Rising of the Sun un-*
 “ *to the going down thereof.* This is that inward Temper of
 “ Mind, and that outward Practice of Life, which he re-
 “ quires ; and which, wherever he meets it, will find Ac-
 “ ceptance with Him.

THE contrary is a Notion, which lays a Foundation for
 everlasting Persecution ; for if Men flatter themselves, that
 they, upon the Account of their particular Systems, are the
 Favourites of Heaven ; and that Others shall want, even to
 Eternity, many Degrees of their Happiness ; will not That
 oblige them, as they love their Children, Families, Friends,
 Neighbours, and Relations ; to use any Means, come into
 any persecuting Measures, to prevent such Opinions from
 spreading, as they imagine, wou’d deprive them of that De-
 gree of Happiness, which otherwise they might ever enjoy :
 And is it not chiefly owing to this Absurdity, that even the
 most

most moderate of the different Sects, are far from treating one another with that Benevolence, which the common Ties of Humanity require?

DID Men believe, that all, who were equally sincere, were equally acceptable to God; there cou'd be no Pretence for the least Partiality, much less for Persecution, either Positive, or Negative: Nor cou'd any Man love another the less, for the widest Difference in Opinions: And then of Course, Mens Indignation wou'd be wholly bent against Immorality, discoverable by the Light of Nature; which, now alas! is but too often protected by Zeal for mere Speculations.

THIS Principle, and this alone, wou'd cause universal Love, and Benevolence, among the whole Race of Mankind; and did it prevail, must soon produce a new, and glorious Face of Things; or, in the Scripture Phrase, *a new Heaven, and a new Earth*; and wou'd free Men from that miserable Perplexity, in which the Fear of mistaking in speculative Matters involves them.

WHAT Assurance, upon any other Ground, can even the Generality of Christians have, that they do not err most dangerously; when they consider what Divisions there have been, from the Beginning, among Christians about such Points? And that the Guides of their own Churches, even the most able, tho' they agree in saying, *Their Fundamentals are plain*; have not always the same Set of *Fundamentals*; and when they have, widely differ in explaining them: Can they, I say, who consider This, be certain, that it is not the Fear of Loss of Preferment, or some other political Reasons, that keep up any Sort of verbal Agreement among them, even in Things own'd to be of the highest Consequence; and which,

which, as such, are plac'd in their *Creeds* and *Articles*? Consider with yourself, what Comfort, what Satisfaction, it must give a Man, especially, on his Death-bed ; to be certain, he is not accountable for any Errors in Opinion ; if he has, according as his Circumstances permit, done his best to discover the Will of God.

Life of *Mabomet*, p. 25.
Edit. 7. 8vo.

DR. *Prideaux* says, " The main Arguments *Mabomet* made use of, to delude Men into the Imposture, were his Promises, and his Threats ; being Those which easily work on the Affections of the Vulgar." If the Bulk of Mankind are so easily deluded by Threats and Promises, when join'd to Opinions as absurd as Those of *Mabomet* ; can there be any other Way to avoid their being deluded in Proportion to the Greatness of those Promises and Threats ; but by annexing them, not to any Set of Opinions, but to Sincerity and Insincerity ? For here, the only Effect they can have, is to make Men judge without Prejudice, and Partiality.

Preface, p. 78.

THE present Bishop of *Sarum* says, " God is just, equal, and good ; and as sure as he is, so he can't put the Salvation and Happiness of any Man, upon what he has not put it in the Power of any Man on Earth to be intirely satisfy'd of." And much less, *say*, I, can a just, equal, and good God put the Salvation, or any Part of the Happiness of the greatest Part of Mankind, upon that, of which, instead of being intirely satisfy'd, they are intirely ignorant. Is it possible, a mistaken Christian can have a Title to God's Favour, and a Man of another Religion not have the same Title ; when that Sincerity, on which the Title depends, is common to them both ? " If the Favour of God, *as the Bishop says*, follows Sincerity, as such ; and equally follows every Degree of " Sin-

ib. p. 91.

“ Sincerity ; ” must not Men of all Religions whatever, if equally sincere, have the same Title to be equally favour’d by God ? Who is the only infallible Judge of their Sincerity ; in the Use of those Talents, whether great, or small ; he has endow’d them with. And,

MR. *Chillingworth* was so far from thinking involuntary Errors Crimes, that he thought it criminal to ask Pardon for them ; and says, “ That wou’d be to impute to
Answer to the Pref. of Charity maintain’d. S. 16.
 “ God the strange Tyranny of requiring Bricks, where
 “ he has giv’n no Straw ; of expecting to gather, where
 “ he has not strow’d ; to reap, where he sow’d not ; of
 “ being offended with us for not doing, what he knew
 “ we cou’d not do.” And,

THE *Romanists* themselves, tho’ they own the common People can have but an imperfect Knowledge, of what their infallible Church requires ; yet say, that “ a Disposition to receive, and an Endeavour to understand what it teaches, is sufficient. ” And shall not the *Protestants* allow as much to such a Disposition, in relation to the Will of God ; as the *Papists* do, to the Will of Man ? But since there are some, to whom these Notions about Sincerity, will appear shocking ; for their sakes, I will quote a Divine, whom they have in a Manner idoliz’d : I mean the famous Mr. *Lesley*, who says, “ In the Beginning God created Man, and left him in the Hands
Lesley of private judgment. P. 221.
 “ of his own Counsel. (*Eccles.* 15. 14.) He set Life and
 “ Death, Blessing and Cursing for him to choose ; and
 “ God will bless, or curse him, according to what he has
 “ set before him ; whether by Revelation, or his own Natural Reason only : And who is Judge of this but God,
 “ who always knows the Sincerity of any Man’s Intentions,
 “ and

“ and what Endeavours he has us'd towards the right Informing his Judgment?

Past. Leter.
P. 54.

IN a Word, this is so evident a Truth, that there are none, but who, with the Bishop of *London*, say, “ Christianity requires no further Favour, than a fair, and impartial Inquiry into the Grounds, and Doctrines of it;” even while they are designing the further Favours of *Fines, Pillories, and Imprisonment, &c.* But to return to the Dr,

I wou'd be glad to know, whether the greater Degree of Happiness, from which Dr. *Clark* wou'd exclude the rest of Mankind; belongs to all those innumerable Sects, that go under the Name of Christians; or to one Sect, by Virtue of its peculiar Fundamentals; or else to all Christians, who, tho' ever so much mistaken, sincerely endeavour to find out the Will of God? If the Dr. says the latter, he can't think this Favour depends on any Set of Notions, but on Sincerity; and consequently, must equally belong to all that are equally sincere: But allowing that Christians are to be rewarded above others, equally sincere; yet if they are likewise subject to be punish'd above others for their Mistakes, even about such abstruse Notions, as divide the most eminent Men of the same most eminent Church; such as Dr. *Waterland*, and Dr. *Clark*; nay, Dr. *Clark*, in some Editions of his Book, and himself in other Editions; where then, is the great Advantage of the Dr's *Hypothesis*? But,

IF Christians are to be punish'd hereafter, for not observing such Things, as the Happiness of Mankind in general does not depend on; God, certainly, is far from being partial in their Favour; if not, where is the Difference?

B. BUT does not the Dr. raise an Argument, from Mens different Capacities and Abilities in this Life, for their having different Degrees of Happiness hereafter ?

A. THO' Men here have different Capacities, yet if That depends on bodily Organs ; all Souls may in Heaven have equal Capacities : But even this Supposition will not serve his Purpose, except the wisest of the Philosophers had not Abilities equal to the meanest Christian ; and so (allowing a Proportion between Happiness and Abilities) were naturally incapable of the same Degree, or Kind of Happiness. But,

THE Dr. himself seems conscious of the Weakness, even of this new *Hypothesis* ; since he, after he had us'd it, to get rid of a troublesome Objection ; strait quits it in saying, “ That as no Man ever deny'd, but that the Benefit of
“ Christ's Death extended backward, to those who liv'd be-
“ fore his Appearance in the World ; so no One can prove,
“ but the same Benefit may extend itself forward to those,
“ who never heard of his Appearance ; tho' they liv'd after
“ it.” If both these, tho' knowing nothing of Christ, or his Death, reap the Benefit of his Death ; what more can the most perfect Believer expect ? So that even on this Supposition, the Dr. must have own'd, that all Men, living up to that Light God has giv'n them, are upon a Level, in relation to their future Happiness. pag. 270.

AND indeed, if Sinners, since the Coming of Christ are not to be sav'd without Repentance and Amendment ; and Sinners, at all Times, were to be sav'd on these Terms, or else cou'd not be sav'd at all ; must not Repentance and Amendment, which suppose a Knowledge of what was to be repented of, and amended ; put all Mankind, at all Times, upon a Level, with relation to their future Happiness ? Can any Thing be more evident, than that, if doing Evil is the

H h h

only

only Foundation of God's Displeasure ; ceasing to do Evil, and doing the contrary, must take away that Displeasure : As long as Men continue in their Sins, they must continue the proper Objects of God's Resentment ; but when they, forsaking their Sins, act a Part suitable to their rational Nature, they of Course become the proper Objects of his Approbation : And This, sure, can't be deny'd, except You suppose, Christ, who *came not to call the righteous, but Sinners to Repentance* ; propos'd some other Way of reconciling them to God, than by persuading them to *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance* ; or, in other Words, by obliging them to live up to the eternal, and universal Law of Righteousness.

Tho' the Dr. says no more than our Articles affirm, *viz.*
 Article. 31. that " the Oblation of Christ once made, is that perfect
 " Redemption, Propitiation, and Satisfaction for the Sins
 " of the whole World, both Original, and Actual ; " yet I wish the Dr. had been more explicit, and told us, what Benefit those who never heard of Christ's Appearance, cou'd gain by his Death.

pag. 259. B. THE Dr. says, that " Christ dy'd, to shew God's
 " irreconcilable Hatred to Sin ; and to vindicate the Ho-
 pag. 250. " nour of his Laws.

A. THESE Reasons, sure, cou'd never influence those, who never heard of Christ ; or, if they had, perhaps, wou'd have been so perverse, as not to imagine, that pardoning the guilty, and punishing the innocent ; cou'd either shew irreconcilable Enmity to Guilt, or Love for Innocence ; and perhaps, govern'd by Prejudices, might think very oddly of a King, who, tho' he freely pardon'd his repenting Rebels ; yet shou'd cause his most loyal, and only Son to be put to Death, to shew his Hatred to Rebellion ;
 and

and to vindicate the Honour of those Laws, which forbid putting an innocent Person to Death ; or any Person to be any Way instrumental to his own Death ; much more to sacrifice himself. Cou'd these Philosophers, who did not imagine any Virtue in sacrificing of Beasts, to wash away the Sins of Men ; easily conceive, a human Sacrifice, which they believ'd human Nature abhorr'd, to be an Expiation for Sins ? Or, that Sins freely pardon'd, cou'd want any Expiation ? Or, that all was mere Mercy, and pure Forgiveness, after a full Equivalent paid, and adequate Satisfaction giv'n ?

pag. 206.

pag. 287.

B. THIS, indeed, seems to me as great a Mystery, as that the same God shou'd receive Satisfaction from, and give Satisfaction to the same God ; and that the same God, who thus receives, and gives Satisfaction, shou'd neither give, or receive any Satisfaction ; since the Holy Ghost, the same God with God the Father, and God the Son, neither gives, or receives any Satisfaction.

A. THO' I have omitted several Things, which well deserve to be criticis'd ; yet, I think, I have said enough to shew the Inconsistency of the Dr's Scheme ; and the Weakness of all those Arguments, by which he attempts to destroy the All-sufficiency, absolute Perfection, Plainness, and Perspicuity of the Law of Nature ; which he had before so fully demonstrated : Who cou'd expect, after we had been told, that as God governs all his own Actions by the eternal Rule of Reason ; so all his rational Creatures are oblig'd to govern themselves in all theirs, by the same eternal Rule : A Rule too, own'd to be so plain, that the *Reason of all Men every where naturally, and necessarily assents to it* : Who, I say, after these, and a Number of other such Expressions, cou'd imagine, that all this

shou'd be unsaid, and the utmost Art employ'd, to shew the Imperfection, Insufficiency, Obscurity, and Uncertainty of the Light of Nature ; and that by Reason of its many Defects, all Mankind, from Age to Age, were in an unavoidable State of Corruption ? And that, even those few Men, who made it their Business to study Natural Religion, were intirely ignorant of some Doctrines, absolutely necessary for the Reformation of Mankind ? Nay, that they were (here the Dr, perhaps, describes his own Conduct ;) “ like Men wandering in the wide Sea, without knowing whither to go, or which Way to take ; “ or having any Guide to conduct them ? ” And, in support of his *Hypothesis*, make no Scruple to represent God, not alike Good at all Times and Places ; and to have acted for many Ages with so little Foresight ; as to give Mankind no other Light for their Conduct, than such, as disabl'd them from answering that End, for which it was giv'n : And afterward, with so little Goodness ; as when he saw this Defect, still to continue the greatest Part of Mankind in that dismal State of Darkness, in which all before were involv'd ? And then, after he had made the most of this strange *Hypothesis*, to quit it for the sake of another, no less strange ? And, tho' he had declar'd, that *God does nothing in the Government of the World, out of mere Will and Arbitrariness* ; yet to suppose, that God acts thus with his rational Creatures ; and without Regard to Merit, arbitrarily designs Christians a greater Degree of Happiness than others ? And at last quit too, even this *Hypothesis* ; by supposing all Men, tho' they never heard of Christ's Death, to be upon a Level, in relation to any Benefits receiv'd from it ? And, I may add,

WHEN

WHEN Men consider, how often this Discourse has been reprinted, and review'd ; by a Man, own'd to be as great a Master of Reason, as ever appear'd in Print ; and withal, both a subtil *Mataphysician*, and excellent *Matbematician* ; an acute *Philosopher*, as well as a deep *Divine* ; One, who never fails to exhaust the Subject he handles ; when Men, I say, consider all this, will they not be apt to cry ?

Si pergame dextra, &c.

Virgil. *Æn.*
2, 291.

B. I must own, You have produc'd several weighty Arguments, many of them new, at least, to me ; to prove that Religion was, and always must be invariably the same ; but since You go out of the common Road, and the Path You take, is scarce at all trodden ; You must expect, it will be said of You, as of some modern Writers, that You are better at pulling down, than building up.

A. WHEN any Notion, in Defence of which People have little to say, is attack'd, they usually cry, *Why will You pull down, except You build up ?* When in Reality, Error must be remov'd, in Order to make Way for Truth : You must pull down one, before You can build up the other : But here, I hope, there's no Room for that Objection ; because, as nothing but Rubbish is remov'd ; nothing but what is either inconsistent with, or, at least, takes off from, the full Exercise of Piety, and Virtue ; so every Thing is advanc'd, which tends to promote the Honour of God, and the Happiness of human Societies. And, I may add, that as in attacking the Superstition of any one Party, all the rest wou'd think me in the right ; so here all Parties, without coming into the

Hypo-

Hypotheses of their Adversaries, may, by equally receding from those arbitrary Things they have brought into Religion, come to an happy Agreement.

FOR my part, I think, there's none who wish well to Mankind, but must likewise wish this *Hypothesis* to be true ; and can there be a greater Proof of its Truth, than that it is, in all its Parts, so exactly calculated for the Good of Mankind, that either to add to, or take from it, will be to their manifest Prejudice. And,

Introduc. to
Def. of Christ.
p. 2.

IF, as Bishop *Candler* remarks, “ They are Deceivers, and true Enemies to Mankind, who do not teach a Religion most worthy of God, most friendly to Society, most helpful to Government, and most beneficial to every Individual ; ” what need we run to his *Jewish Rabbies*, or any other *Rabbies*, to discover this true Religion ? If 'tis by this Test, that our Reason must judge of the Truth of all Religion ; are not they the best Friends to Mankind, who teach such a Religion, without the least Mixture of those arbitrary Things, that have caus'd such fatal Contentions among Christians ? And which, at the best, *serve only to divert them from attending to a Religion most worthy of God, most friendly to Society, most helpful to Government, and most beneficial to every Individual* ; and withal, is a Religion, as I hope, is here fully prov'd, founded upon such demonstrable Principles, as are obvious to the meanest Capacity ; and most effectually prevents the Growth, both of Scepticism and Enthusiasm.

I intirely agree with this Right Reverend Father, that “ Christianity in itself, stripp'd of the Additions that Policy, Mistake, and the Circumstances of Time, have made to it, is a most holy Religion ; ” but I may add, that

that by Reason of these Additions, it is become, in most Places, a most unholy Religion. And can we hope to get rid of these Additions, but by bringing them to the Bishop's own Test? I might here ask him, Who are they, that have brought in, and still defend these Additions to Christianity; which, as all fair, and candid Writers own, have giv'n great Advantages to its Adversaries?

WHAT good Christian is not ready to join with the excellent Dr. Sykes, in wishing, "That Christians would not vend under the Name of Evangelical Truths, the absurd, and contradictory Schemes of ignorant, or wicked Men? That they would part with the Load of Rubbish, which makes thinking Men sink under the Weight, and gives too great a Handle to Infidelity?" The Hands of Friends to Christianity, *says he*, have been much embarrass'd, thro' Fear of speaking against local Truths; and its Adversaries have so successfully attack'd those Weaknesses, that Christianity itself has been deem'd indefensible; when, in Reality, the Follies of Christians alone have been so." If this be true, have I not shewn some Resolution, in daring to attack the darling Weaknesses, and Follies of false Christians; in proving that true Christianity is so far from being indefensible, that it carries its own Evidences with it; or in other Words, all its Doctrines plainly speak themselves to be the Will of an infinitely wise, and good God; as being *most friendly to Society, most helpful to Government, and most beneficial to every Individual*; or, in one Word, free from all Priest-craft.

B. THERE's one Objection which will always stick, You will be represented as an Affecter of Novelty; and that

that 'tis Pride and Vain-glory, which makes You go out of the common Road.

A. THAT is a Reflection All must expect, who endeavour to reform any prevailing Abuses: They little understand human Nature, who do not see, that Novelty, in this Case, can only serve to make a Man despis'd by the Majority, for his Ignorance; in not being able to discover that Truth, which they, at first Sight, clearly perceive; as well as hated by them, for propagating false Doctrine; and inhumanly treated for it, if it clashes (and where does not Reformation clash) with the Interest of a certain Set of Men, who have two Thirds of Mankind, viz. the *Bigots* and *Immoral*, intirely at their Devotion. But,

I am so far from being a *Novelist*, that All, except where they disagree with themselves, must agree with me: Are not All of my Sentiments, who own, that their Revelation contains all Things worthy of having God for its Author? For that supposes, that Reason, antecedently to Revelation, can tell them what is, or is not worthy of having God for its Author: And do not all recede from Revelation, or, which is the same, recede from the plain, obvious, grammatical Construction of its Words, whenever That, in the least Point, recedes from the Religion of Nature and Reason? Which being, as *Dr. Prideaux owns*, wrote in the Hearts of every One of us from the Creation; is "the Touchstone of all Religion; and that, "if the Gospel varies from it in any Particular, or "in the minutest Circumstance is contrary to its Righteousness; that is strong enough to destroy the whole Cause; and make all Things else that can be said for its Support, totally ineffectual." Which supposes, we can't

See Pag. 50,
61. where
the Passages
are at large.

can't judge of the Truth of any Revelation, till we apply to it the Touchstone of all Religion; and see whether it agrees with that in all Particulars: And do not all, without regard to the plain Meaning of the Words, in interpreting the Precepts of the Gospel (which are, for the most Part, deliver'd in general, undetermin'd, and very often, hyperbolical Terms;) so explain, limit, and restrain these Precepts, as to make them agreeable to the Touchstone of all Religion, the Nature, and Reason of Things; for Fear, that otherwise they might depreciate Morality: And in this Case, they, as 'tis allow'd, are the best Interpreters, who most recede from the *killing Letter*. And is not this, in Effect, saying with the present Bishop of *Bangor*, "That the Gospel is a Republication of the Law of Nature; and its Precepts declarative of that original Religion, which is as old as the Creation. And, " 'Tis as reasonable to suppose, that three Angles of a Triangle should be equal to two right Ones in one Age, and unequal in another; as to suppose, that the Duties of Religion should differ in one Age, from what they were in another; the Habitudes, and Relations from which they flow continuing always the same.

See the Quotation at large, p. 79, &c.

THE Principles I maintain are so evident, that they who are introducing Things in Opposition to them, yet must own their Force. Dare any say, that God is an arbitrary Being, and his Laws not founded on the eternal Reason of Things; even while they are contending for his acting arbitrarily, and giving us such Laws as are founded on mere Will and Pleasure? Will any maintain, that our reasoning Faculties were not giv'n us, to distinguish between Good and Evil, Religion and Superstition? Or that they will not answer the End for which they were giv'n?

WILL any affirm, that the Nature of God is not eternally the same ? Or that the Nature of Man is chang'd ? Or that the Relations God and Man stand in to one another, are not always the same ; nay, even while they are making Alterations in these Relations, by supposing new Laws, and new Duties ?

IF All own, that God, at no Time, cou'd have any Motive to give Laws to Mankind, but for their Good ; and that he is, at all Times, equally good, and, at all Times, acts upon the same Motives ; must they not own with me, except they are inconsistent with themselves, that his Laws, at all Times, must be the same ? And that the Good of Mankind is the Test, the *Criterion*, or the internal Evidence, by which we are to judge of all his Laws ? But,

IF, after all, I am still criminal, it must be in not owning, that God created the greatest Part of Mankind to be damn'd ; or, which is the same, made such Things necessary to their Salvation, as they were incapable of knowing ?

Heb. 11. 6. And in my Asserting, that *God is a Rewarder of those, who diligently seek him* ; tho' they do not seek him under the Direction of this, or that Set of Men ; who, provided they can make themselves necessary *here*, care not who they damn *hereafter*. And thus,

Acts 10. 34. 35. IN believing with St. Peter, that *God is no Respector of Persons ; but in every Nation he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him.* And with St. Paul, that *the Gentiles do by Nature the Things contained in the Law ;* Rom. 2. 14. And that *God will render to every Man* (whether Believer, or Rom. 2. 6. Unbeliever ;) *according to his Deeds ;* And that *the Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation, — Teaching us, — we shou'd live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World,* (which takes in the whole of our Duty) *has appear'd to all Men,* and at all Times. And IN

IN believing with our Saviour, that *the Whole need* Mat. 9. 12.
not a Physician; and that *the Doctrine he taught shews* John 7. 17.
itself to be *the Will of God*; and that *he did not speak*
of himself; and in believing the Description, that God
himself gives of the New Covenant, *I will put my Laws* Heb. 8. 10.
into their Minds, and write them in their Hearts: —
They shall not teach every Man his Neighbour, — They Ver. 11.
shall all know me from the least to the greatest.

IN a Word, All are forc'd to own these Sentiments I
contend for, except the *Anthropomorphites*; they, indeed,
said, that *Fallible Reason must give Place to infallible Re-*
velation; or in Dr. *Waterland's* Words, "That to advance
"Natural Light, that is, *Pagan* Darknefs, in Opposition to
"Scripture Evidence, is setting up human Conjectures
"above divine Truths:" And that, since the Scripture
so frequently imputes human Parts, and Passions to God,
we ought not to doubt of it; only because we can't re-
concile it with that Philosophy, with which the Bulk of
Mankind, for whom the Scripture was chiefly wrote, are
intirely ignorant of.

Remarks on
Dr. Clark's Ex-
posit. of the
Ch. Catechism
p. 66.

IN our next Conference (it being high Time to put
an End to this) I shall shew You, that all Mankind, *Jews,*
Gentiles, Mahometans, &c. agree, in Owning the Sufficien-
cy of the Law of Nature, to make Men acceptable to
God; and that the Primitive Christians believ'd, there
was an exact Agreement between *Natural* and *Reveal'd*
Religion; and that the Excellency of the Latter, did con-
sist in being a Republication of the Former.

FOR the present, take these few Authorities: "If, says
the renowned *Origen*, "we admit the Judgment of God to
"be just, we must acknowledge, that there can be no
"Ground for the Punishment of Sinners, unless the com-

Origen contra
Gellum, l. 1. c.
p. 6.

“ mon Conceptions of all Men, are sufficient to give them
 “ a sound Understanding in the Duties of Morality. And,
 “ therefore, it is not to be thought strange, that those
 “ Things which God has taught us by the Prophets, and
 “ by our Saviour, were implanted by him in the Minds of
 “ all Men; that so every Man, having had the Intention,
 “ and Meaning of the Law written in his own Heart,
 “ shou’d be left without Excuse before the Divine Tribunal.
 “ And,

Lactantius, the most eloquent of the Fathers, seems ravish’d
 with the Description *Cicero* gives of the Law of Nature;
 and therefore, chooses to express his own Sense of it, in the
 I. 6. c. 8. Words of that Philosopher. “ The Law of God, *says he*, is
 “ necessary to be observ’d, That will lead us into the Way of
 “ Happiness; that holy and heavenly Law, I mean, which
 “ *Marcus Tullius* has, as it were, divinely describ’d in his third
 “ Book *de Republica*; and whose Words, I will, therefore, sub-
 “ join. Right Reason is a Law of Truth, consonant to Nature,
 “ implanted in all Men, uniform and eternal.—This Law nei-
 “ ther needs to be propos’d, nor can it ever be; either in whole,
 “ or part, repeal’d; neither Senate, nor People, can discharge
 “ us from the Obligation of it; we need not look abroad for
 “ an Expositor, to make us understand it. It is not one Law at
 “ *Rome*, another at *Athens*; one at this Time, another here-
 “ after; but one, and the same immutable Law continues,
 “ and extends itself to all Times and Nations; and one God
 “ is the common Lord, and Governor of all Things. He it
 “ is, that has fram’d, propounded, and establish’d this Law;
 “ and whosoever obeys not him, abandons even himself, re-
 “ nounces his own Nature; and in so doing, suffers actually
 “ in himself the greatest Punishment, tho’ he escapes all
 “ Things else which are deem’d so.

ST.

ST. *Austin* says, “ The Reason why God has given us a written Law, is not because his Law was not already written in our Hearts; but because Men letting out their Appetites after Things abroad, became Strangers to themselves; and therefore, we have been summon’d, and call’d upon by him, who is every where present, to return into ourselves: For what is that the outward written Law calls for, unto those who have forsaken the Law written in their Hearts; but *Return, O ye Transgressors, to your own Hearts?*” 1st Pet. 57.
 Isaiah 45. 8.

I shall, likewise, shew You, that the Law of Liberty, that perfect Law of Liberty, which we are oblig’d to maintain in all our Words and Actions, as the Law we are to be judg’d by; does not consist in a Freedom from Things of a moral Nature, for that wou’d be perfect Slavery; but from all those Things as are not of such a Nature: And that ’tis evident from the Reasoning, which runs thro’ all the Epistles, that the placing Religion in any indifferent Things, is inconsistent with the Nature of Christianity; ’tis introducing *Judaism*, or what (as Christians have found to their Cost) is still more prejudicial. James 1. 25.
 1b. 2. 21.

AND therefore, instead of transcribing the best Part of the Epistles, I shall only mention a Text, or two: The Apostle of the Gentiles not only says, *Stand fast in the Liberty, wherewith Christ hath made You free*; but declares, *Wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty*; and consequently, that they who impose any indifferent Things, as Part of Religion, sin against our Christian Liberty; and act by another Spirit than that of the Lord: And I am afraid, that in this, as well as in many other Cases, the Spirit of the Lord, and the Spirit of the Church, in most Places, have been very opposite. And lest we shou’d mistake in this important Point, the Apostle: 1 Cor. 16 13.

like--

likewise tells us, not only in what Things the Kingdom of
 Rom. 14. 17. God does, but in what Things it does not consist. *The King-
 dom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteousness, Peace,
 and Joy in the Holy Ghost ; for he that in these Things serveth
 Christ, is acceptable to God, and approv'd of Man : Let us,
 therefore, follow after the Things which make for Peace, and
 Things wherewith we may edify one another. If these are
 the only Things, by which we can serve Christ, and which
 will make us acceptable to God, and approv'd of Men ; can
 such Things, as have no Tendency to promote Righteous-
 ness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost, make us service-
 able to Christ, or acceptable either to God, or Man ?*

THESE Words of the Apostle, tho' they need no Para-
 phrase, yet I shall mention what Calvin says on this Place,
*Nam fieri non potest, ubi quispiam Deo acceptus est ac ho-
 minibus probatus, quin perfecte in ipso vigeat ac floreant reg-
 num Dei. Qui tranquilla placidaq; Conscientia per Justi-
 tiam servit Christo, tam hominibus quam Deo se approbat.
 Ubi ergo est justitia, & pax, & gaudium spirituale, illic
 regnum Dei suis omnibus numeris est absolutum.* And with
 him Bucer, Musculus, and Others of our first Reformers,
 agree. And if the Kingdom of God, which has these
 Things, is absolutely perfect, *omnibus suis numeris absolu-
 tum* ; it can only be the Kingdom of Satan, which re-
 quires Things of a different Nature : And if 'tis in these
 Things only we can serve Christ, Others can't be intro-
 duc'd, but for the Service of Antichrist.

HOWEVER, I shall, at present, content myself with say-
 ing, There are but two Ways for any Thing to oblige ;
 either from the Reason of the Thing, or else from a
 positive Command : Now, if there are no such Things,
 as are commanded to be observ'd at all Times, and by
 all

all People ; and no Commands can oblige those, to whom they were not giv'n ; we have no Way left, to know what Things oblige perpetually, but from their Nature ; which will sufficiently distinguish them from those, which (in so miscellaneous a Book as the Bible, taking in such a vast Period of Time) might be given upon certain Occasions, and particular Reasons ; in which we are no other Ways concern'd, than like them, to act according as the Circumstances we are in require. Without this, Christians wou'd have no certain Rule, to know what Precepts oblige perpetually ; all being alike commanded in Scripture, without making any Difference ; no Precepts being said to bind all Mankind, or to bind any for ever, except those relating to the *Jewish* Oeconomy ; which, in an hundred Places, we are told, are to last for ever.

To comprise the Matter in few Words, what I have been endeavouring to prove , is,

First, THAT there are Things, which, by their internal Excellency, shew themselves to be the Will of an infinitely wise, and good God.

Secondly, THERE are Things, which have no Worth in themselves ; yet because those that have, can't many Times be perform'd without them, these are to be consider'd as Means to an End ; and being of a mutable Nature, are left to human Discretion, to be vary'd as best suits those Ends ; for whose sake alone they are instituted.

Thirdly, THAT there are some Things so indifferent, as not to be consider'd either as Means, or Ends ; and to place any Part of Religion in the Observance of These, is highly superstitious. And I may venture to say, He that carries these Distinctions in his Mind, will have a truer Notion of Religion, than if he had read all the *School-men*, *Fathers*, and *Councils*.

B. I own, 'tis Time to give You some Respite, and to thank You for a Favour, which can't be too much acknowledg'd ; in thus freely communicating your Thoughts on this important Subject ; and doing it after such a Manner, as cannot, were this Conference to be publish'd, offend Persons, tho' of the greatest Gravity, who have the Interest of Truth at Heart.

A. BEFORE we part, I must remind You of the Occasion of this Conference ; for tho' You plainly saw, that God never intended Mankind shou'd be without Religion ; or cou'd ordain an imperfect Religion ; and therefore, did not see how to avoid concluding, there must have been, from the Beginning, a Religion most perfect, which Mankind, at all Times, were capable of knowing ; yet You were at a Loss, how to make out Christianity to be this perfect, this original Religion ; how far I have gone in removing this Difficulty, You best know : All I can say, is, I am willing, whenever You please, to resume the Conference ; and begging Leave to repeat what I mention'd at first, am ready to give up my *Hypothesis*, if You can name One attended with fewer Difficulties ; and likewise, to assure You, that if I have advanc'd any Notion, which does not naturally, and necessarily shew itself to be the Will of God ; by tending to promote his Honour, and the Good of Men ; I here intirely renounce it : And by not persisting to defend Error, give this uncommon Mark of an ingenuous Disposition. *Errare possum, Hæreticus esse nolo.*

F I N I S.





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